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EARLY PERSIAN POETRY
FROM THE BEGINNINGS DOWN TO
THE TIME OF FIRDAUSI

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

PERSIA PAST AND PRESENT

A BOOK OF TRAVEL AND RESEARCH

Cloth, 8vo, xxxi + 471 pages, with more than 200 illustrations and a map.

NEW YORK, THE MACMILLAN COMPANY, 1906.

FROM CONSTANTINOPLE TO THE HOME OF
OMAR KHAYYAM

TRAVELS IN TRANSCAUCASIA AND NORTHERN PERSIA
FOR HISTORIC AND LITERARY RESEARCH

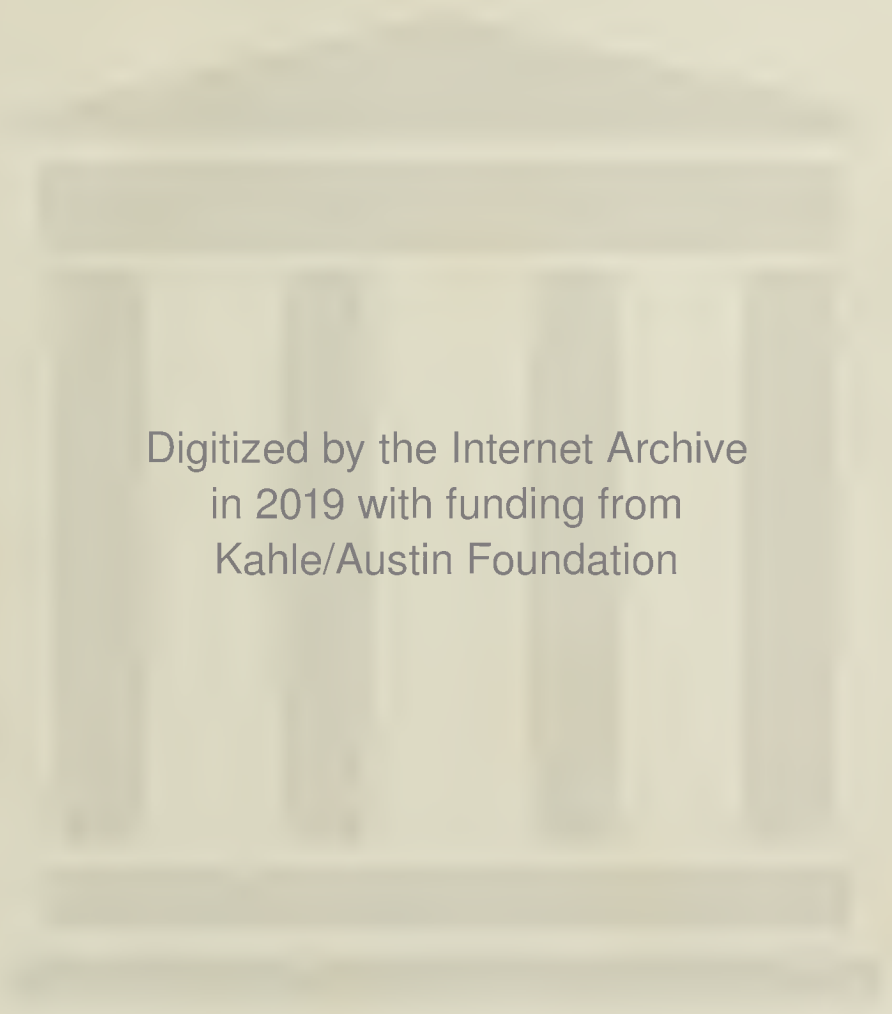
Cloth, 8vo, xxxiii + 317 pages, with over 200 illustrations and a map.

NEW YORK, THE MACMILLAN COMPANY, 1911.

ZOROASTER, THE PROPHET OF ANCIENT IRAN

Cloth, 8vo, xxiii + 314 pages, with 3 illustrations and a map.

NEW YORK, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1899 (reprinted 1919).



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[Frontispiece]

KING KHUSRAU PARVIZ SEATED ON HIS THRONE
 (From the Cochran Collection of Persian Manuscripts in the Metropolitan
 Museum of Art, New York)

EARLY PERSIAN POETRY

FROM THE BEGINNINGS DOWN
TO THE TIME OF FIRDAUSI

WITH TEN ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

A. V. WILLIAMS JACKSON

PROFESSOR OF INDO-IRANIAN LANGUAGES IN COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY,
AUTHOR OF 'PERSIA PAST AND PRESENT,' 'FROM CONSTANTINOPLE
TO THE HOME OF OMAR KHAYYAM,' AND
'ZOROASTER, THE PROPHET OF ANCIENT IRAN'

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1920

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Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing Co. — Berwick & Smith Co.
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

TO
KATE

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PREFACE

THIS book is a labor of love — the outcome of years of devotion to the study of Persia, its history, languages, and literature, and is in part the result of four journeys through the Land of the Sun, in 1903, 1907, 1910, and 1918. Some of the records of these travels have appeared in print elsewhere. The appreciation with which those studies were received has been an incentive to supplement them by a literary presentation, in brief form, of the earlier poetry of Persia down to about 1000 A.D., so as to include Firdausi's Shah-namah, or 'Book of Kings,' the great epic poem of Persia. Perhaps the reception of the present work may give encouragement enough to lead to the preparation of a couple of volumes on 'Persian Mystic Poetry' and on 'The Lyric and Romantic Poetry of Iran.'

The aim of the chapters included in the present volume — and I hope that they may not be found unduly long — is to give succinctly the main outlines of the several early periods now chosen for presentation, and to illustrate, by translations made from the original Persian, the characteristics of the various authors, regarding whom I have gathered material from all sorts of sources, native and foreign.

Many of the citations are only small fragments of verse from Persian poets so long dead that they have been evoked almost as shades from the far-distant past; but there is something very human in their brief messages that makes their story more up-to-date than might be imagined. Some of the *reliques* of their works, however,

are longer and have a fuller metrical tale to tell. The episode of Suhrab and Rustam, moreover, is a well-known classic in literature, so that a new rendering into blank verse may not be unwelcome.

In making all these translations it has been my endeavor to combine the feeling of the original with the element of a faithful reproduction in modern form. To be fairly literal and at the same time fairly literary is not an easy task. How far I have succeeded in attaining my aim must remain for others to judge. It will be easy, for any one who cares to do so, to compare text and version by making use of the references to sources, conscientiously given in the footnotes regarding every passage I have translated. In the three brief selections where I have chosen the English version by other scholars (Cowell, Pickering, Browne) references are likewise given directly after the passages.

In making the renderings there has been no attempt in general to imitate the Persian rhythms, which are elaborate and depend upon the quantity of syllables, heavy and light, and thus do not lend themselves to English versification any more than do the Greek and Latin metrical schemes. But, on the other hand, the general system of rhyming in Persian has been imitated in a broad manner, occasionally even the favorite Persian monorhyme,¹ and in all cases of departure from such schemes the footnotes call attention to the arrangement of the rhyme in the original stanzas. The quatrain-form has been indicated to the eye wherever it occurs, so that lovers of Omar Khayyam can quickly catch *rubāʿī* verses that long antedate the famous Tentmaker of Nishapur. In one of the longer selections translated from the Shah-namah, moreover, an attempt has

¹ Cf. pages 29, 33-34, 36 n. 1, 52 n. 2.

been made to suggest the rhythm and couplet-verse of Firdausi's epic.¹ Any one who is interested in the verse-forms and the rhetoric of the Persians will find abundant material on the subject in the well-known works of Browne, Gladwin, Rückert, Blochmann, and Wahrmund, not to mention others.

I have purposely omitted all diacritical marks which would indicate the length of vowels or differentiate between certain consonants in Persian names. These diacritical marks have been employed, however, in the Alphabetical List of Poets which I have included as part of the introductory matter (pages xx-xxi). They may also be found in the very occasional transliterations from the Persian which I have given in *italics*. I hope that neither the general reader nor the specialist may be embarrassed by my method in either case. Regarding the pronunciation of Persian names see the special note, page xxii.

Persian style and its poetic characteristics — often bizarre to us — are familiar to those who know Omar Khayyam, Sa'di, Hafiz, or some of the rest; and though I have not yet reached the period of Persian poetry when the *gul* and the *bulbul* fill the verse with tuneful measures, I still hope that even without 'the nightingale and the rose' — though they are mentioned — this volume, with lute, madrigal, and trump, may find 'gentle readers.'

I now take the wished-for opportunity of expressing my thanks to some of the many to whom gratitude is due.

One of the first inspirations to write on Persian poetry came in the form of an invitation, in 1908, from the Johns Hopkins University, to deliver seven lectures on the subject, as Percy Turnbull Lecturer, on the foundation established by Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Turnbull of Balti-

¹ See pages 96-99.

more, Md., in memory of a deceased son. As a later sequel, in 1919, after a fourth journey to Persia, came a request from the University of Chicago, through President Harry Pratt Judson, who had been Director of the American-Persian Relief Commission, to present the same general subject in three addresses in a lecture-series founded by William Vaughn Moody. In addition to these sources there came also a special inspiration from the audiences present on the various occasions when I gave public lectures, in the halls of my Alma Mater, on Persian Poetry and other topics relating to the Orient.

I desire to express as well, with grateful acknowledgment, my indebtedness to the works of scholars in the same field, especially to the writings of my friend Edward G. Browne, the most distinguished English authority on the literature of Persia, and also to the works of the late scholars Darmesteter of Paris and Horn of Strassburg. Ethé's erudite and creative contributions, which have left a standard to emulate for all time, have been constantly consulted; and Pizzi's name will always rank with those of the foremost Persian scholars of Italy. The essays of Pickering, though published long ago, became accessible to me only after Chapter IV was practically ready for the press, but they have been constantly consulted, as the added references will show.¹ My indebtedness to these scholars in particular, as well as to others, may best be inferred from the abundant citations in the footnotes and in the List of Works of Reference.

But there are likewise special debts of obligation and gratitude which I wish to record. My assistant at Columbia, Dr. A. Yohannan, whose birthplace was in Northwestern Persia and who has been my devoted helper

¹ See the remarks, p. 32 n. 2 and p. 47 n. 1.

for years, stood ready at all times to give aid in the solution of difficult problems that presented themselves in the texts translated.

My former student and ever friend, Dr. Louis H. Gray, whose scholarly contributions are too well known to need mention here, most generously read through the first rough draft of a considerable number of the chapters and gave valuable suggestions which I wish heartily to acknowledge.

But two fellow-workers, always at hand, come in for the highest meed of thanks. Dr. George C. O. Haas, formerly Fellow in Indo-Iranian Languages at Columbia, has not only read the proofsheets throughout, supplementing by his skilled eye the care bestowed by the compositors and readers of the Norwood Press, but has also prepared the Index and aided with his advice in regard to all matters of detail connected with the make-up of the volume.

Dr. Charles J. Ogden, who was formerly a student in the Department and who most generously supplied my place at Columbia during my eight months' leave of absence on the relief mission to Persia in 1918-1919, has worked almost daily with me on the volume as the sheets were passing through the press. To his broad scholarship, sound learning, wise judgment, and fine critical sense I owe more than I can readily state.

To each and all of these willing helpers my most sincere thanks are expressed anew.

A. V. WILLIAMS JACKSON.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY,
February 12, 1920.

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LIST OF WORKS OF REFERENCE

This list includes only the works most often referred to as covering this particular period of Persian literature. Detailed information regarding other books and papers is given in the footnotes.

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———— The Chahár Maqála ('Four Discourses') of Nidhámí-i-'Arúdí-i-Samarqandí, translated into English by Edward G. Browne. In *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1899, pp. 613-663, 757-845. [Reprint, pp. 1-139.]

Aufi. Lubábu 'l-Albáb of Muḥammad 'Awfí. Part 1, edited by Edward G. Browne and Mírzá Muḥammad Qazwíní, London and Leyden, 1906; Part 2, edited by Edward G. Browne, London and Leyden, 1903. (Persian Historical Texts Series.) [Part 2 was issued before Part 1.]

Browne, Edward G. A Literary History of Persia from the Earliest Times. Volume 1, From the Earliest Times until Firdawsí; Volume 2, From Firdawsí to Sa'dí. London and New York, 1902, 1906. [The standard work in English, and constantly consulted, as shown by the references in the footnotes.]

———— Biographies of Persian Poets: From Táríkh-i Guzída of Mustawfí. In *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1900-1901. [See specific references in the footnotes.]

———— See also Aruzi, Aufi, Daulatshah, Mustaufi.

Darmesteter, James. Les Origines de la poésie persane. Paris, 1887. [A valuable little book of 88 pages.]

Daulatshah. Tadhkiratu 'sh-Shu'ará, 'Memoirs of the Poets,' of Dawlatsháh bin 'Alá'u'd-Dawla, edited by Edward G. Browne. London and Leyden, 1901. (Persian Historical Texts Series.)

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- königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, 1873, pp. 663-742.
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- Firdûsî als Lyriker. In *Sitzungsberichte der königlich bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu München* 1872, pp. 275-304; 1873, pp. 623-659. [Two articles. — Cf. Nöldeke, 'Persische Studien, II,' in *Wiener Sitzungsab.* 126. 14 and n. 3, 34 n. 1; also Pickering, 'Firdausi's Lyrical Poetry,' in *National Rev.*, Feb. 1890.]
- Rûdagî's Vorläufer und Zeitgenossen. In *Morgenländische Forschungen: Festschrift H. L. Fleischer gewidmet*, pp. 33-68, Leipzig, 1875.
- Neupersische Litteratur. In *Grundriss der iranischen Philologie*, vol. 2, pp. 212-368, Strassburg, 1896-1904.
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- *Le Livre des rois, traduit et commenté par Jules Mohl*. 7 vols. Paris, 1876-1878.
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- *The Shah-namah, translated by Alexander Rogers*. London, 1907. [Incomplete.]
- *The Shâh Nâmah, translated and abridged in prose and verse by J. Atkinson. Edited by J. A. Atkinson*. London and New York, 1886. (Chandos Classics.)
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- Zoroaster, the Prophet of Ancient Iran. New York, 1899. (Reprinted, 1919.)
- Mustaufi.** The Ta'rikh-i-Guzída, or 'Select History,' of Ḥamdu'lláh Mustawfí-i-Qazwíní, reproduced in Facsimile from a Manuscript, with an Introduction. Part 1 (text), by Edward G. Browne, London and Leyden, 1910; Part 2 (abridged translation and indices), by Edward G. Browne and R. A. Nicholson, London and Leyden, 1913. (Gibb Memorial Series, vol. 14.)
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- Shams ad-Din.** Al-Mu'jam fí Ma'áyíri Ash'ári 'l-'Ajam, a Treatise on the Prosody and Poetic Art of the Persians, by Shamsu 'd-Dín Muḥammad ibn Qays ar-Rází, edited by Mírzá Muḥammad of Qazwín. London and Leyden, 1909. (Gibb Memorial Series, vol. 10.)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

For full titles of publications cited in abbreviated form in the footnotes, consult
the List of Works of Reference, pages xvi-xviii.

A. H.		(<i>Anno Hegirae</i>), Muhammadan era.
Bh.		inscription of Darius at Behistan.
c.		(<i>circa</i>), about.
Cat.		Catalogue.
ch.		chapter.
Chr.		Chrestomathie.
d.		died.
ed.		edition, edited by.
fl.		(<i>floruit</i>), flourished.
fol.		folio.
fols.		folios.
Grundr.		Grundriss der iranischen Philologie.
id.		(<i>idem</i>), the same author.
JRAS.		Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.
loc. cit.		(<i>loco citato</i>), at the place previously cited.
M. F.		Morgenländische Forschungen.
Mem.		Memorial.
n.		note.
op. cit.		(<i>opus citatum</i>), the work previously cited.
r.		recto (in manuscripts).
Sitzb.		Sitzungsberichte.
tr.		translation, translated by.
Vd., Vend.		Vendidad.
Yt.		Yasht.
ZDMG.		Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft.

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF POETS INCLUDED IN THIS VOLUME

Transliteration of names with diacritical marks added to denote the more technical spelling, and with dates given wherever possible.

(Names only incidentally mentioned are omitted here; for fuller references consult Index.)

- ‘Abbās of Merv.** A pioneer in Persian poetry, master also of Arabic. Died 815 or 816 A.D.
- Abu ‘l-Muẓaffar.** In fuller form, Abu ‘l-Muẓaffar Naṣr al-Istighnā‘i of Nishāpūr. A Sāmānid poet. Tenth century A.D.
- Abū Naṣr of Gilān.** From this Sāmānid poet, Abu ‘l-Malik Naṣr Gilānī, a stanza is preserved. Latter part of the 10th century A.D. is the presumable date.
- Abū Sa‘īd.** The noted Persian mystic poet (to be discussed, it is hoped, in a later volume, cf. p. 58). Born 967, died 1049 A.D.
- Abū Salīk of Gurgān.** A poet of the later Ṣaffārid period. Flourished about the end of the 9th century A.D.
- Abū Shukūr of Balkh.** A poet of the earlier Sāmānid period. Flourished about 941 A.D., and completed the *Āfarīn-nāmāh*, a work now lost, in 947–948 A.D. (A. H. 336).
- Aghāchī (or Aghājī).** In fuller form, Abu ‘l-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Ilyās al-Aghāchī of Bukhārā. A warrior-poet of the later Sāmānid period. About the middle of the 10th century A.D. or somewhat later.
- ‘Asjadī.** In fuller form, ‘Abdu ‘l-‘Azīz b. Maṣṣūr ‘Asjadī. Associated with Firdausī as a poet at Maḥmūd’s court. Flourished 1025 A.D.
- Avicenna.** See Ibn Sinā.
- Bahrām Gūr.** Sāsānian king, whom legend recounts to have composed verses. Reigned 420–438 A.D.
- Bārbad.** Sāsānian minstrel, called by Persian writers Bārbad, and by Arab authors Bahlabad, Balahbad, or Fahlabad, being various forms of an older Persian Pahlapat. Flourished 600 A.D.
- Daḳīkī.** In fuller form, Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad ad-Daḳīkī of Ṭūs. Poet of the latter part of the Sāmānid period, and noted as Firdausī’s predecessor in the epic. Died after 975 A.D.
- Farrukhī.** In fuller form, Abu ‘l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Jūlūgh (or Ḳulūgh) of Sīstān. Associated as a poet with Firdausī at Maḥmūd’s court. Died 1037 or 1038 A.D.
- Firdausī.** The famous epic poet of Persia. His name Firdausī is a poetic title, ‘of the Garden’ or ‘of Paradise.’ In fuller form, Abu ‘l-Ḳāsim Ḥasan b. ‘Alī of Ṭūs, though there are variations in the nomenclature. About 935–1025 A.D.

- Firūz al-Mashriḳī.** A poet of the later Ṣaffārid period. Flourished about 890 A.D.
- Ḥanṣalah of Bādghīs.** A poet of the Ṭāhirid period. Flourished about 850 A.D.
- Ibn Sinā, or Avicenna.** The famous philosopher, physician, and poet (to be discussed, it is hoped, in a later volume, cf. p. 57). Born 980, died 1037 A.D.
- Junaidī.** In fuller form, Abū 'Abdu 'llāh Muḥammad al-Junaidī. A bilingual poet (Persian and Arabic) of the Sāmānid period. Tenth century A.D.
- Khabbāz of Nishāpūr.** The baker-poet and physician; earlier Sāmānid period. Died 953 A.D.
- Khabbāz's son.** Abū 'Alī ibn Ḥakim Khabbāz. Composed verses; see preceding entry regarding his father as a poet.
- Khusrau Parvīz.** Sāsānian king, to whom the composition of a couplet may possibly be ascribed. Reigned 590-628 A.D.
- Khusravānī.** In fuller form, Abū Ṭāhir aṭ-Ṭabīb ('the Physician' or aṭ-Ṭayyib, 'the Sweet') b. Muḥammad al-Khusravānī. A Sāmānid poet. Tenth century A.D.
- Kisā'ī.** In fuller form, Abū Ishāḳ (or Abu 'l-Ḥasan) Kisā'ī, 'the Man of the Cloak.' A poet of the later Sāmānid period, who lived on, it seems, somewhat beyond that time. Date of death generally supposed to be 1002 A.D., but possibly later.
- Maḥmūd of Ghaznah.** Famous ruler, and said to have been himself a poet as well as a patron of poets, especially of Firdausī. Reigned 998-1030 A.D.
- Manṭīkī of Rai.** In fuller form, Manṣūr b. 'Alī al-Manṭīkī of Rai. A Buwaihīd poet. Flourished in the latter half of the 10th century A.D.
- Muntaṣir.** In fuller form, Abū Ibrāhīm Isma'īl Muntaṣir. Last of the Sāmānid princes, and a poet. Died 1005 A.D.
- Rūdagī, or Rūdakī.** In fuller form, Abū 'Abdu 'llāh Ja'far ibn Muḥammad ar-Rūdagī (or Rūdakī). The most noted of the Sāmānid poets. About 880-954 A.D.
- Shahīd of Balkh.** A poet of the earlier Sāmānid period. Died about 950 A.D.
- Shukūr.** See Abū Shukūr.
- 'Umārah of Merv.** In fuller form, Abū Manṣūr b. Muḥammad (or Aḥmad) 'Umārah. Poet and astronomer (compare later, Omar Khayyam), of the later Sāmānid and the early Ghaznavid periods. Flourished end of the 10th and beginning of the 11th century A.D.
- 'Unṣurī.** In fuller form, Abū 'l-Ḳāsim b. Aḥmad 'Unṣurī of Balkh. Poet laureate at the court of Maḥmūd of Ghaznah, and famed through association with Firdausī's name. Died 1040 or 1050 A.D.

NOTE ON PERSIAN PRONUNCIATION

A brief remark on the pronunciation of Persian may be of some service to the reader.

The accent of all Persian words, with few exceptions, is on the last syllable, and this method of accentuation may in general be adopted throughout the book.

The vowels and diphthongs have, in the main, the Continental, or Italian, value.

The consonant *g* is always hard, as in 'go', 'give'; *kh* is spirant, as in Scotch 'loch' or German 'noch'; *zh* is likewise spirant, as in 'azure'; *gh* is similarly a spirant, a sort of roughened *g*.

It is not necessary here to enter into a discussion of minor details regarding the matter of pronunciation. For a similar reason I have omitted, in the body of the text, all diacritical marks which would indicate the length of vowels or differentiate between certain consonants in Persian names. These diacritical signs, however, will be found in the Alphabetical List of Poets which I have included as part of the introductory matter (p. xx). They may also be found in the very occasional transliterations from the Persian which I have given in *italics*. I hope that neither the general reader nor the specialist may be embarrassed by my method in either case.

EARLY PERSIAN POETRY
FROM THE BEGINNINGS DOWN TO
THE TIME OF FIRDAUSI

EARLY PERSIAN POETRY

CHAPTER I

PERSIAN POETRY OF ANCIENT DAYS

(From before 600 B.C. to about 650 A.D.)

‘Metre of an antique song.’

—SHAKESPEARE, *Sonnets*, 17. 12.

PERSIA has always been a land of poetry, nor has the lyric quality ever been lost from the voice of her people. The guide who leads the traveller’s cavalcade Persia a across the mountains, and the master of the Land of Poetry caravan, as he heads the long camel train that winds its slow way among the hills, can each troll snatches of verse from poets centuries old. The nightingale still pleads with the rose

‘That sallow cheek of hers t’ incarnadine,’

and the plaintive note of the wood-pigeon seems yet to harmonize in poetic tenderness with the delicate perfume of the narcissus. Even the rays of the dawning sun and the soft glances of the rising moon, as they touch the slender form of the tapering cypress, call back to the heart, as of yore, the myriad images used by the Persian lover in paying court to the graceful damsel of his choice.

The beginnings of Persia’s poetry are lost in the mists of antiquity. And yet — if we may judge from analogy

— we shall probably not be far astray if we say that the earliest poetry was of two types, the ballad and the epic.

Beginnings The ballad, which was later to develop into
Obscure such diverse forms as the lyric, hymn, satire, and panegyric, is, first of all, the recounting of a tale, and the epic itself is but a magnified and polished ballad, so that all poetry was probably, at its original inception, a ballad. The epic type in Persian poetry is admirably represented in finished form in Firdausi's *Shāh-nāmah*, or 'Book of Kings,' which sets forth in measured cadence, more easy to be remembered by the narrator than prose, the deeds of the heroes of the race.¹

Of the hypothetical primitive ballad no traces remain in Persian literature, nor is it with love poetry that the earliest Iranian records begin. For in Persia, as in other lands of the East, the earliest note of poetry — at least so far as extant specimens go — burst forth in a prophet's song. It was the voice of Zarathushtra, or Zoroaster, the great religious teacher of Persia, in the seventh century B.C. or earlier, chanting in fervid tones an anthem of divine praise. His cry broke the silence of the night perchance in some mountainous cavern in Northwestern Iran, or heralded the morn as he wandered priestlike through the borders of Persia, preaching the story of his communings with the god Ormazd and the arch-angels.²

¹ Cf. L. H. Gray, in *Encyclop. Relig. and Ethics*, 6. 2, d. (art. 'Fiction'). *Prophet of Ancient Iran*, pp. 34, 40-51, New York, 1899.

² Cf. Jackson, *Zoroaster, the*

And what is the burden of these ancient chants, or psalms in verse? It is now a vision of heaven and the future life, and now an appeal to mankind to repent, to abandon the way of the wicked, and to follow the path of righteousness. For a moment there may be a note of despondency in the tone, since deaf ears hearken not to his inspired word; but comfort is always at hand; it is to be found in God and in the marvelous works of His creation. Hence rises to the prophet's lips the impassioned question to his Maker in that hymn of the *Avesta*, or Sacred Book of Zoroaster, which begins with the refrain,

Tat Thwā pārāsā ərəš mōi vaocū Ahurā
This I ask Thee — tell it to me truly, Lord

the ancient rhythm and divisions of three stanzas of which I attempt to imitate here in my translation.

ZOROASTER DEVOUTLY QUESTIONS ORMAZD

This I ask Thee — tell it to me truly, Lord!
Who the Sire was, Father first of Holiness?
Who the pathway for the sun and stars ordained?
Who, through whom is't moon doth wax and wane again?
This and much else do I long, O God, to know.

This I ask Thee — tell it to me truly, Lord!
Who set firmly earth below, and kept the sky
Sure from falling? Who the streams and trees did make?
Who their swiftmess to the winds and clouds hath yoked?
Who, O Mazda, was the Founder of Good Thought?

This I ask Thee — tell it to me truly, Lord!
Who, benignant, made the darkness and the light?

Who, benignant, sleep and waking did create?
 Who the morning, noon, and evening did decree
 As reminders to the wise, of duty's call? ¹

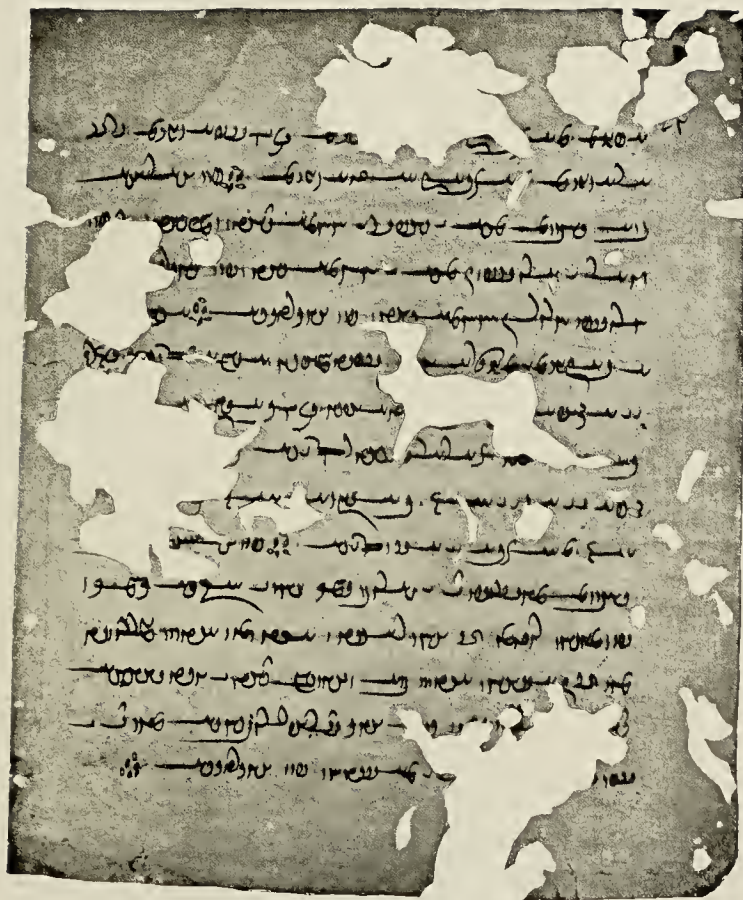
His own soul knows the answer, since Ahura Mazdah (Ormazd) and the celestial hierarchy form ever the theme of Zoroaster's song. These psalms — *Gāthās*, 'hymns, anthems,' they are called — give the outpourings of the seer's heart in rhythmic measures that resemble in meter the Vedic verses of the bards of ancient India, though somewhat later than the Vedas in time of composition.²

There are touches of poetry throughout the Avestan Yashts, or 'praises' in metrical stanzas glorifying the various personifications of divine powers or the demigods and heroes of the faith. These compositions in verse, sometimes mingled with prose, are later than the Gathas in language and in time of redaction, though metrically (and in certain religious aspects) older. The simplicity of the meter in the Yashts shows a more antique phase than the elaborate Gathic rhythms, and possibly the mixture of prose and verse may be older than is commonly thought; but this mixture is explicable in more than one way. The Yashts, moreover, are doubtless the work of various hands, still inspired by Zoroaster, but using material that presents religious aspects in part older than his time.

¹ From the Avesta (ed. Geldner, 1. 148), *Yasna* 44. 3-5. The two last lines of stanza 5 refer to the three times for daily prayer.

² The Gatha meters are of seven types: 7 + 9 syllables (3 verses in a

stanza); 4 + 7 (5 verses); 4 + 7 (4 verses); 7 + 7 (3 verses); 7 + 5 and 7 + 7 + 5 (2 verses each); (7 + 9) + (3 + 5); 4 + 7 (2 verses) and 3 + 5 (one verse) twice repeated.



A PAGE OF AN AVESTAN MANUSCRIPT WITH PAHLAVI
TRANSLATION

(From the Avestan Manuscript Jp. 1 in the Columbia University Library)

[To face page 4]

The metrical stanzas of the Yashts, like numerous other parts of the Avesta, are composed in a somewhat free octosyllabic measure that resembles the Kalevala verse, so familiar to us through Longfellow's 'Hiawatha'; and sometimes a Yasht passage rises to the height of real poetry. At random might be chosen a few lines from the tenth Yasht, a composition that is devoted entirely to extolling the grandeur of Mithra as next only in the angelic host to the Supreme Lord, Ahura Mazdah, or Ormazd. Mithra, the angel of truth and the embodiment of the sun's light, rides forth majestic in his chariot across the heavens, guiding and watching over men, even in the battle which his mighty power sets in motion, or sternly punishing the sinner that breaks his word and pledge. Here may be cited a stanza from the Mithra Yasht in transliteration and translation:

YASHT 10. 13-14

*Yō paoiryō mainyavō yazatō
tarō Harām āsnaoitī
paurva-naēmāt aməšahe
hū yaṭ aurvaṭ-aspahe.
Yō paoiryō zaranyō-pīsō
srīrā barəšnava gərəwnūiti
aḍāt vīspəm ādiḍāiti
Airyō-šayanəm səvištō,
yahmya sūstārō aurva
paoiriš irā rāzayente*

A YASHT PASSAGE IN PRAISE OF MITHRA

Mithra, the celestial angel,
Foremost climbeth Mount Haraiti (Alburz)
In advance o' the sun immortal,

Which is drawn by fleeting coursers.
 He, the first, in gold adornment
 Grasps the beauteous lofty summits ;
 Thence beneficent he glanceth
 Over all the Aryan home-land,
 Where the valiant chiefs in battle
 Range their troops in countless numbers.¹

Poetic strains may be caught here and there in other parts of the Avesta — sometimes embedded in the midst of prosaic passages — but they are not over-many in number.² Sufficient, however, they are to show that the musical chord was struck nearly three thousand years ago in ancient Iran.

The note perhaps was sounded festally at even an earlier date, far back in the legendary reign of King Jamshid (which tradition fancifully places at about 3000 B.C.), for the imagination of the poet Firdausi heard echoes of the bard singing at the New Year's banquet in the court of that monarch in the Golden Age of Iran.³ Catches of song, moreover, if we may believe the romantic history by Xenophon, enlivened the merry bouts in which the Median monarch Astyages indulged, in the days when Cyrus the Great was still a boy.⁴

The pillared halls of the great Achaemenian kings Darius, Xerxes, Artaxerxes, at Persepolis, must likewise

¹ Avesta, *Yasht* 10. 13-14.

² On poetry in the Avesta compare also J. H. Moulton, *Early Religious Poetry of Persia*, Cambridge, 1911.

³ Firdausi, *Shāh-nāmah*, ed. Vullers and Landauer, 1. 26, l. 55 ; cf. tr. Mohl,

Livre des rois, 1. 37 ; Warner, *Shāh-nāma*, 1. 34 ; see also Mirkhond, *History of the Early Kings of Persia*, tr. Shea, p. 107, London, 1832.

⁴ Cf. Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, 1. 3. 10.

have echoed at times to the ring of the poet's minstrelsy. We may at least infer this from the fact that, late in the fourth century B.C., Chares of Mytilene reported that the Greeks in Alexander's train had heard 'barbarians' (Persians) singing the tale of the romantic love of Zariadres and Odatis, a story in which the lover is first seen by the heroine in a dream and later wins her hand in marriage. So well known and prized among all the peoples of Asia was this romance that, as Chares adds, 'they have represented the story in paintings in their temples and palaces, and even in their own private houses.'¹ A theme like this must have furnished inspiration to more than one poet, especially as the name Zariadres represents the Avestan Zairivairi, the brother of Zoroaster's patron, Vishtaspa, and hero of the first of the holy wars as recounted later in a Pahlavi prose epic fragment and in Firdausi's poetic *Shāh-nāmah*.² Although no verses of the original love-story of Zariadres (Zairivairi, Zarir) and

An Old
Romance
retold in
Achaemenian
Times

¹ So Chares of Mytilene in the tenth book of his 'History of Alexander,' as cited by Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, 13, ch. 35; tr. Yonge, 3. 919-920, London, 1854. Compare also Rapp, in *ZDMG.* 20. 65; Darmesteter, *Les Origines de la poésie persane*, p. 2, Paris, 1887; id. *Le Zend-Avesta*, 3, p. lxxxi; and especially G. Cowell, *Life of Edward Byles Cowell*, pp. 27-31, London, 1904; and E. B. Cowell, *A Persian Legend of Athenaeus*, in *Gentleman's Magazine*, July, 1847, pp. 25-29; cf. also Jackson, *Zoroaster*, p. 73, n. 5; and

Andreas, in Rohde, *Der griechische Roman*, 3 ed. p. 48, note, Leipzig, 1914.

² For references to Zairivairi in the Avesta (Yt. 5. 112 seq.; 13. 101), and in the Pahlavi prose epic *Yātkār-ī Zarīrān*, as Zarēr, and in Firdausi's *Shāh-nāmah*, as Zarīr, see Jackson, *Zoroaster*, pp. 104-115, footnotes. The name Zairivairi in Avestan means 'having a yellow (brass) breastplate'; and Odatis would be presumably the equivalent of an assumable Avestan adjective *hu-zāiti*, 'of good birth'; cf. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch*, pp. 382, 231, Marburg, 1895.

Odatis remain, Firdausi, in a different connection, has woven into the narrative of his great epic certain incidents of the story that are easy to recognize.¹

We may be sure that the minstrel's craft did not disappear, though it may have languished, during the dark ages of the Parthian rule in the centuries directly preceding and following the Christian era — the very time when Iran was at war with Rome.² Yet it must remain a source of regret to us that it is no longer possible to cite a single verse which dates from that particular era, nor has even any literary monument in prose survived from the Parthian period, though some sporadic passages of the Avesta may possibly date from Parthian times.³

Certain we are, however, that the poet's art was a cherished one in Sasanian times, or from the third to the seventh century A.D., even though all the literary remains that have survived in the Pahlavi, or Middle Persian of that period and later, have come down in prose.⁴ Tradition, however, has

¹ Firdausi in the *Shāh-nāmāh* (tr. Mohl, 4. 238–243 ; Warner, 4. 329–332) makes Zarir's brother Gushtasp and the beautiful Kitayun (or Katabun) the hero and heroine in a striking episode of his great heroic poem, which practically parallels the love-story of Zariadres and Odatis, as told above. Cf. also the references on p. 7, n. 2.

² For the custom of the Persian kings having songs and music at their suppers we have the authority of Heracleides of Kyme (fourth century B.C.) as cited by Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 4. 26

(tr. Yonge, 1. 235), which would be applicable to Parthian as well as Sasanian times, if we may judge from the allusions to Bahram Gur, below, p. 10, n. 4.

³ For a discussion of the problem (with reference to Darmesteter's theory) see Geldner, in *Grundr.* 2. 33–39.

⁴ Attempts to find verse in the extant Pahlavi works, including the *Yātkār-ī Zarīrān* and the *Kār-nāmāh-ī Artakhshīr-ī Pāpakān*, have thus far proved unsuccessful, even though the

preserved the names of at least three court poets, besides Barbad (mentioned below) and the harper Sakisa (or Nakisa), who was no doubt also a poet singer; but they are mere *umbræ nominum*.¹

Legend tells likewise of two well-known Sasanian Kings who could turn a verse, and to one of these, Bahram Gur (420–438 A.D.), in company with his beloved Dilaram, ‘Heartsease,’ the invention of the rhyming couplet in Persian is ascribed, the music of their souls springing to their lips in rhythmic verse. According to the story as preserved in native sources, it was on an occasion when Dilaram, the beautiful, had accompanied her lord upon a lion hunt. Bahram, upon encountering the lion, grappled with it and held it captive by the ears, then glorified his prowess by likening himself, in what happened to be cadenced words, to a wild elephant and a rampant lion. Dilaram caught up the cadence in the same meter and compared him to a lofty mountain, the line ending in a word that rhymed with the close of

King Bahram
Gur as a Poet
(420–438 A.D.)

subjects of the two latter heroic and romantic stories are found versified later by Firdausi in the *Shāh-nāmāh*. Consult Horn, *Gesch. d. pers. Litt.* pp. 43–44, Leipzig, 1901; and especially Horn, *Asadi’s neupersisches Wörterbuch Lughat-i Furs*, pp. 16–17, Berlin, 1897, where mention is made of F. C. Andreas’s view that the Hagiabad Inscription contains a metrical passage.

¹ The names of the three minstrels referred to are Afarin, Khusravani, and Madharastani, as recorded by

al-Baihaki, *Kitāb al-Maḥāsīn* (ed. Van Vloten), p. 363; and the harper Sakisa occurs in Nizami’s *Khusrau and Shīrīn*, as referred to by Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, 1. 18, London and New York, 1902. But the name Sakisa is written Nakīsā in the Nizami Mss. 7 and 8 described in Jackson and Yohannan, *Cat. Pers. Mss.*, New York, 1914; and it appears as Nakiyyā in the lithographed ed. pub. at Teheran, 1312 A.H. (= 1894 A.D.). Query — cf. p. 12, n. 2, and Justi, *Iran. Namenbuch*, p. 289 (‘Sarkaš’)?

his.¹ Thus was rhyme born! But there are other stories, besides, regarding the origin of Persian rhyme.²

We have also the authority of the earliest extant biography of the Persian poets, the work of Aufi (fl. 1210–1235 A.D.), for the statement that ‘Bahram Gur was the first who composed Persian verse,’ and that he had seen a collection of his Arabic poems in Bukhara, from which he quotes fragments of odes in Arabic, together with the two Persian rhyming verses.³ Firdausi still earlier represents Bahram as taking delight in verses that were chanted to him to the accompaniment of the lute.⁴ But even if ‘that great hunter’ may not have had renown as a king-poet, he nevertheless gave inspiration to many a later Persian verse by his adventurous deeds, and he thus well deserves a share in the fame.

To another sovereign of the House of Sasan, the romantic and kingly lover Khusrau Parviz (590–628 A.D.), may possibly be ascribed a rhyming distich engraved on the walls of the palace of the beautiful Shirin, at Kasr-i

¹ For this story see Daulatshah, *Tadhkiratu 'sh-Shu'arā*, ed. Browne, pp. 28–29, London, 1901; and compare Browne, *Lit. Hist. of Persia*, 1. 12; Blochmann, *Prosody of the Persians*, p. 2, Calcutta, 1872; Ethé, *Die höfische und romantische Poesie der Perser*, p. 1, Hamburg, 1887; id. *Rūdagī's Vorläufer*, in *Morgenländische Forschungen*, p. 36; Darmesteter, *Les Origines de la poésie persane*, p. 1; Pizzi, *Storia della poesia persiana*, 1. 65, Turin, 1894; Costello, *Rose Garden of Persia*, pp. iv–v; Horn, *Gesch. d. pers. Litt.* p. 47. Consult also Shams

ad-Din ibn Kāis, *al-Mu'jam* (ed. Mirzā Muḥammad, in *Gibb Memorial* 10), p. 169.

² See Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 1. 12–13.

³ Aufi, *Lubāb al-Albāb*, chap. 4 (beginning), cf. ed. Browne and Mirzā Muḥammad, 1. 20, London, 1906; Ethé, in *Morg. Forsch.* p. 36; and cf. Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 1. 262.

⁴ Cf. *Shāh-nāmah*, tr. Mohl, vol. 5, pp. 446, 474, 476, 499–500, 509–510, 516, 517; tr. Warner, 7. 51–52, etc. Observe in this connection the reference to Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 4. 26, given above, p. 8, n. 2.

Shirin, and still legible in the tenth century. The authority for this is Daulatshah in the fifteenth century, who cites in his memoirs of the Persian poets the statement of Abu Tahir of Khatun to the effect that 'in the time of Azud ad-Daulah of Dailam [who was a Buwaihid prince of the tenth century A.D.] there was found on an inscription upon the palace at Kasr-i Shirin ("Shirin's Palace") in the region of Khanikin, which was not then entirely in ruins, the following couplet written in the antique Persian style':¹

A Couplet
ascribable to
Khusrau II
(590-628 A.D.)

huzhîrâ, ba-gaihân anûshah bi-zî
jihân râ ba-dîdâr tûshah barî

TO THE FAIR SHIRIN

Ah, Beauteous One! Upon this earth, happy for aye do live!
Since to the world by thy mere glance such joyance thou dost give.²

I had in memory the lines of this distich, which may reasonably be ascribed directly to Khusrau Parviz himself, as I wandered among the ruins of Kasr-i Shirin when coming from Khanikin on my fourth journey to Persia in 1918; but I could find no traces of any inscribed stones among the débris; yet a careful search may some day unearth a stone or a tablet, which may bear still more lasting witness to the enamored verse of a Sasanian king.

¹ Daulatshah, *Tadhkiratu 'sh-Shu-'arâ* (ed. Browne), p. 29.

² Ordinarily the meaning of *tûshah*, *tûshah* in Persian is 'sustenance,' but I have rendered it by 'joyance,' cf. Skt. *toṣa*, 'satisfaction, comfort.' Re-

garding this couplet consult, furthermore, A. de Biberstein Kazimirski, *Divan de Menoutchehri*, p. 7, Paris, 1886, where a slightly different reading and a somewhat different translation and interpretation are given.

The fact that Khusrau was also a patron of poetry is shown by the honor that he paid to the minstrel Barbad,

Barbad, the Sasanian Bard (fl. 600 A.D.) or Bahlabad, the sweet singer of his court.¹ The story goes — and it is told by Firdausi — that this gifted bard first won the king's

ear by singing a ballad as he stood hidden amidst the branches of a cypress tree in the royal garden on a moonlight night.² So great was the minstrel's favor with the monarch that when the king's horse Shabdiz, 'Black-as-night,' died, the courtiers selected Barbad as the only one who might venture to break the news to his Majesty, for Khusrau had sworn to kill the man that ever should bear these tidings to him. With consummate art the child of the Muses contrived to weave the tale into verse, accompanied by the plaintive wail of his lute, until Khusrau himself, in listening to the strain, suddenly divined the truth and cried out, 'Ah, woe is me! My horse Shabdiz is dead!' ³

Thus from those ages long ago the gentle thrum of the lute strings — the true accompaniment of poesy — still faintly echoes; and that echo makes us wish that we

¹ Persian authors give the poet's name as *Bārbad*, but Arabic writers as *Bahlabad*, which more correctly points back to an older Pahlavi-Persian form, *Pahlapat*. See Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 1. 14–15, where an excellent series of references to Bahlabad, Barbad, in Persian and Arabic sources is given; and compare also Browne, *The Sources of Dawlatshāh . . . and an Excursus on Bārbad and Rūdagī*, in *JRAS.* 1899, pp. 37–69. Consult likewise

Justi, *Iran. Namenbuch*, p. 63 ('Barbad'), p. 237 ('Pahlapet').

² Firdausi, *Shāh-nāmah*, tr. Mohl, *Le Livre des rois*, 7. 255–260; Firdausi (*loc. cit.*) gives also the name of the rival minstrel, Sargish, whom Barbad supplanted in Khusrau's favor.

³ See also Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 1. 17–18. Regarding a request made also to Barbad by Shirin, to remind Khusrau of a promise, see Browne, in *JRAS.* 1899, p. 60.



KING KHUSRAU PARVIZ AND THE MINSTREL BARBAD
(From the Cochran Collection of Persian Manuscripts in the Metropolitan
Museum of Art, New York)

might have been fortunate enough to catch even a few strains also from others of those bards who sang in Pahlavi, the national language of Sasanian Persia in the seventh century A.D., before the cataclysm of the Arab Conquest. The tuneful numbers of their verse, alas, have passed away ; but the names at least of some of these minstrels lived long enough after the Moslem invasion to prove to the victors that, two centuries later, the hushed music of Persian poetry would again awake to ring with the old-time spirit of Iran.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW AWAKENING OF PERSIAN SONG AFTER THE MUHAMMADAN CONQUEST

THE TAHIRID AND SAFFARID PERIODS

(From about 800 to 900 A.D.)

‘Disjecti membra poetæ.’

—HORACE, *Satires*, 1, 4, 62.

THE Moslem Conquest meant to Persia in many respects what the Norman Conquest meant to England. The battles of Kadisia and Nahavand (637, 642 A.D.) were the Hastings of Persia; and with the murder of the last Sasanian king, in 651, Persia came under the Muhammadan rule of the Arabs.

The Muham-
madan Con-
quest (Seventh
Century A.D.)

There followed, in consequence, an infiltration of foreign blood, a certain amount of fusion in language, a partial blending in thought. But beyond the sacrifice—great as it was—of giving up the old national religion of Zoroastrianism, vanquished Iran yielded little more to the victorious Arab than Britain gave up to the invading Norman. If the Persian vocabulary took on something of a foreign tinge, the poetic verse flowed the smoother for it; and if the freedom of religious thought was fettered for a time by the bonds of Islam, the true Persian spirit threw off the shackles two centuries later, when it achieved a semi-independence of its own upon the decline of the

Caliphate at Baghdad in the ninth century A.D., and with this emancipation began the re-establishment of its national life and laid the foundations for a renaissance in the realm of letters.¹

Beginnings may be small, but great results may follow. Such was the case with the reborn art of poesy in the Province of the Sun. The infant cry was slender at first, muffled by the stifling hand of Islam, but it was the *vox humana*. Poetry, nursed for two hundred years by the fostering care of three princely dynasties of the truer Iranian blood — Tahirid (820–872), Saffarid (860–903), Samanid (874–999), not to mention the Buwaihids (also of the tenth century), or the eleventh century Ghaznavids of Afghanistan — was destined to grow in grace and stature until the thin register of its voice changed into the manly tone of a Firdausi with all the virility of the race within its compass.

Poetry
Reborn

The mastery of the newer speech, with its infusion of Arabic — the Pahlavi tongue having now been transformed into New Persian — was already complete, and could develop only in range and power of expression. The language, in fact, has ever since remained essentially the same, so that Persian has changed far less in a thousand years than has English in the comparatively brief period from Shakespeare to the present.²

The cradle of the literary renaissance was Eastern Iran,

¹ Cf. also Browne, *Lit. Hist. of Persia*, 1. 6, 339–341.

² On the curiously analogous development of Persian and English cf.

Misteli, *Neupersisch und Englisch*, in *Philologische Abhandlungen Schweizer-Sidler gewidmet*, pp. 28–35, Zurich, 1891.

or the provinces of Khurasan and Transoxiana. The city of Merv, the ruins of which may still be visited in the environs of the modern town that perpetuates the name in Russian Turkistan, was the scene. This ancient city, the Zoroastrian Marghu of the Avesta,¹ and 'Queen of the World,' as it was entitled in medieval times, had witnessed the death of the last Sasanian king, but was destined to witness also the rebirth of Persian poetry, for within its walls was born, some-
 Abbas of Merv a Pioneer (d. 815 or 816 A.D.) time before 800 A.D., Abbas of Merv, to whom common tradition, rightly or wrongly, ascribes the renown of being the earliest minstrel to chant verse in the newer Persian tongue.²

The occasion which inspired the effusion of the poet was the triumphal entry made, in 809, by the Caliph Mamun, the son of Harun ar-Rashid of Arabian Nights fame. Abbas, as a bard, was chosen to greet the monarch with a panegyric in celebration of the event; and though on other occasions he had made use of Arabic as the vehicle for his poetic compositions, he now chose his native Persian to be the medium of his encomium. A few of these laudatory lines to Mamun have been preserved; and in fancy we can hear a faltering accent in the minstrel's tone as he apologetically sings:

¹ Avesta, *Vend.* 1. 5, 7; *Yasht*, 10. 14; and cf. in the Old Persian Inscriptions, *Bh.* 2. 7; 3. 11; 4. 25.

² The year of the death of Abbas of Merv is recorded as (200 A.H. =) 815 or 816 A.D. The authenticity of the verses ascribed to him is generally

accepted by scholars, but is questioned by A. de Biberstein Kazimirski, *Divan de Menoutchehri*, pp. 8-9, Paris, 1886, and Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 1. 13, 341; 2. 13. Consult Pizzi, *Storia della poesia persiana*, 1. 66.

FROM THE FIRST PERSIAN PANEGYRIC

Before me no poet as yet, an ode in this fashion hath sung,

There is lack in the Persian speech, in this manner of verse to begin;
Yet that is the reason I chose in this language *Thy* praises to sing,

That through lauding and praising Thy Highness, real grace and
true charm it may win.¹

Perhaps a better idea of the lilt of the original stanza may be obtained from a transcript of the Persian lines themselves:

Kas bar-în minvāl pīsh az man chunīn shīrī na-guft,

Mar zabān-i Pārsī rū hast tū īn nau-i bain;

Lēk z-ān guftam man īn midhat turā tā īn lughat,

Gīrad az madh u şanā'-i ḥazrat-i tū zīb u zain.²

Echoes of the verse, no doubt, were heard throughout the land, for other poets were emboldened, as a consequence, to raise their voice in their own vernacular. One of these bards was Hanzalah of Badghis³ (about 850 A.D.), who lived in the time of the Hanzalah
of Badghis
(about 850 A.D.) Tahirids (820–872 A.D.), a dynasty more favorable to Arabic than to Persian culture. The early Persian biographer, Aufi, praises the verses of Hanzalah by saying, ‘the graceful flow of his expression is like the Water of Paradise, and his verses have the freshness of cool wine (*shamūl*) and the agreeableness of the northern wind (*shamāl*).’⁴ So well known were the poems of

¹ In rendering I have preserved the original rhyme *b d* of the Persian.

² Aufi, *Lubāb al-Albāb*, 1. 21, ed. Browne and Muḥammad al-Ḳazvinī, 1. 21, London, 1906; cf. Ethé, *Rūdā-gī's Vorläufer und Zeitgenossen*, in *Morgenländische Forschungen* (Fest-

schrift an Fleischer), pp. 37–38, Leipzig, 1875.

³ Badghis was the name of a district northwest of Herat.

⁴ Aufi, *Lubāb al-Albāb*, 2. 2, ed. Browne, London, 1903; and Ethé, in *Morg. Forsch.* p. 39.

Hanzalah that they were worth gathering into a Persian *Dīvān*, or 'Collection,' only a few fragments of which, however, remain.¹ Here is a quatrain (the earliest *rubā'i* thus far quotable), which contains an odd conceit founded on an old superstition; the poet warns his sweetheart that it is futile for her to throw rue-seed on the fire to avert the influence of the evil eye.²

RUE AND THE EVIL EYE

Though rue into the fire my dear one threw,
 Lest from the evil eye some harm accrue,
 'Twould naught avail her — either rue or fire;
 Her face the fire — her beauteous mole the rue!³

More potent, however, was the charm in another stanza ascribed to Hanzalah, for it inspired a simple ass-herd to win a crown. Chancing one day to read four of Hanzalah's verses, this donkey-driver became fired with the ambition to make an attempt to gain the throne; and, rising triumphant over every obstacle, he finally grasped the sovereignty. The inspiring stanza which served the ass-herd king, Ahmad of Khujistan, as a motto for his life's success was this:

¹ Mention of the *Dīvān* of Hanzalah of Badghis is made in the work, cited below, by Nizami-i Aruzi, *Chahār Maḳāla*, translated by Browne, in *JRAS.* 1899, pp. 655-656 (= reprint, pp. 43-45).

² On the custom, still current in Persia, of burning *sipand*, 'rue,' to avert the evil eye, see Jackson, *From Constantinople to the Home of Omar*

Khayyam, p. 119, New York and London, 1911; and cf. especially Elworthy, *Evil Eye*, pp. 344-347, London, 1895.

³ For text see Aufi, *Lubāb al-Albāb*, 2.2, ed. Browne, London, 1903; and Ethé, in *Morg. Forsch.* p. 40; cf. also tr. Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 1. 452; Pickering, *Nat. Rev.* 15. 677; Pizzi, *Storia*, 1. 128.

RUN THE RISK

If lordship in a lion's jaws should hang,
Go, run the risk, and seize it from his fang;
Thine shall be greatness, glory, rank, and place,
Or else, like heroes, thine be death to face.¹

From the period of the following dynasty, the Saffarids, or 'Braziers,' so called from their founder in 872 A.D., Yakub, the son of Laith, who was a 'coppersmith' (*saffār*), we have the names and fragmentary remains of a couple of poets.² One of these bards was Firuz al-Mashriki, or 'the Easterner,' as his appellative *mashrikī* implies, who lived about 890 A.D. Only three of his stanzas, however, seem to have been preserved, even though his compatriot Aufi accounted his songs 'sweeter than a stolen kiss' — *az kublat-i duzdādah khūshtar*.³ The following two couplets, descriptive of an arrow, contain an odd fancy:

Firuz
al-Mashriki
(about 890 A.D.)

THE ARROW

A bird the arrow is — 'What marvel!' thou wilt say —
A bird that maketh ever some living thing its prey.
A gift the eagle gave it — from her own quills a plume,
Wherewith it straightway bringeth *her* nestlings to their doom.⁴

¹ For text and the whole story see the above-mentioned work by Nizami-i Aruzi, *Chahār Maqāla*, tr. Browne, pp 43-45; and cf. Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 1. 355, 452. But cf. Mustaufi, *Ta'rikh-i Guzīdah*, ed. Browne in *Gibb Mem.* 14. 1, p. 379, who quotes the verses anonymously and applies the story to Saman, ancestor of the Samanid dynasty. Rhyme, *b d*.

² The name also is mentioned of Mahmūd-i Varrāk, the 'Copyist' or 'Bookseller,' who, like Hanzalah, be-

longed partly to the Tahirid period as well. See Ethé, in *Grundr.* 2. 218; Horn, *Gesch. d. pers. Litt.* p. 48.

³ See Aufi, *Lubāb*, 2. 2.

⁴ For the text see Aufi, 2. 2; Ethé, in *Morg. Forsch.* p. 41, finds metrical reasons to include a *nah* 'not' — 'That it may not carry away her young brood'; but the manuscript reading, adopted above in the rendering, seems equally good; cf. also Browne, 1. 453; Darmesteter, p. 9.

Another stanza of Firuz Mashriki, in admiration of his sweetheart, is quite bizarre in its imagery. I translate it also because it seems to have escaped notice elsewhere.

HER BEAUTIFUL LIPS AND TEETH

Ah, look at her beautiful teeth, and her lips with their exquisite line;

They keep me forever inflamed with the warmth of the passion of love!

Those teeth that flash bright as the Pleiads, when aloft in the zenith they shine;

Those lips that seem halo of moonlight round the orb of the full moon above!¹

‘This is the very ecstasy of love!’ and it was perhaps from those very lips that the kiss was stolen to which Mashriki’s verses are likened. Two other stray distichs of his poetry have been preserved in a chance quotation — but enough!²

The poetic artery that throbbed in the pulse of Eastern Iran must have had an answering beat as far westward as the Caspian Sea before the end of the Saffarid era, or 900 A.D., for it is felt in the verse of Abu Salik of Gurgan, who lived in the latter part of that era, and was a native of the district (Gurgan) which corresponds to the ancient Hyrcania.³ Abu Salik, we are told, ‘spread out

¹ The text is found cited in Horn’s edition of Asadi’s *Lughat-i Furs*, fol. 17, p. 26, Berlin, 1897 (*Abhandlungen d. Kgl. Gesellschaft d. Wiss. zu Göttingen*, Neue Folge, Bd. I Nr. 8).

² See Shams ad-Din b. Kais, *al-*

Mu’jam, ed. Muḥammad Ḳazvīnī, in *Gibb Memorial Series* 10, pp. 267–268.

³ This province is the same as Varkāna in the old Pers. Inscriptions, *Bh.* 2. 92.

the carpet of words (*bisāt-i sukhun*) and raised aloft the banner of eloquence.’¹ Nobility of thought certainly characterizes one of his few rhymed stanzas that have come down to us.

ONE’S HONOR

Shed, if thou wilt, thine own blood on the earth,
Better than shed thine own pure honor’s worth —
Better to worship *idols* than a *man*;
Give ear, take heed, and practise he who can!²

Another surviving stanza, which has a sportive touch, may be quoted as perhaps having formed part of a sonnet on his mistress’ eyebrow!

TO HIS SWEETHEART’S EYEBROW

With thy eyebrow thou’st stolen my heart ’way from me;
What! dost judge with thy lips, and thy eyebrow the thief!
Wilt thou claim a reward? — for heart-robbing, a fee?
A robber rewarded! That’s passing belief!³

Two other chance distichs of Abu Salik have been preserved, but that is all.⁴

With these three or four names of the olden-time poets, and their few verses, we bid adieu to the first two epochs — Tahirid and Saffarid — of the newer Persian renaissance. We may be happy at least that the voice of song had been awakened from slumber.

¹ Aūfī, *Lubāb*, 2. 2-3; Ethé, in *Morg. Forsch.*, pp. 41-42.

² For the text see references in the preceding note. The rhyme in the original is *b d*.

³ Aūfī, p. 3; Ethé, p. 41. The

word *muzhah* is perhaps more literally ‘eyelash.’

⁴ See Shams ad-Din b. Kāis, *al-Mu’jam*, pp. 255, 276 (in *Gibb Memorial Series*, vol. 10, cited above).

CHAPTER III

RAYS FROM LOST MINOR STARS

EARLIER SAMANID PERIOD

(About 900–950 A.D.)

‘When the morning stars sang together.’

— *Job*, 38. 7.

THE Samanid period, or the entire century down to 1000 A.D., was a true age of minstrelsy, and this day-spring of song was marked, when the zenith was reached, by the fame of two poets, Rudagi and Dakiki, both of whom will be described in the next and a later chapter.

Earlier
Samanid
Period
(First Half of
Tenth Century
A.D.)

But around these twin stars was clustered a group whose magnitude was of the second degree, yet from each of which a glimmer of light has come down through the ages, though the orb that gave it birth faded from ordinary observation more than a thousand years ago.

Scintillations from one of these lost stellar orbs have been caught in rays from the poet Abu Shukur of Balkh,

Abu Shukur which might have disappeared forever if lovers (fl. 941 A.D.) of Omar Khayyam were not scanning the horizon for quatrain-beams that may be older than the *rubāʿīs* of the Tent-maker of Nishapur. Abu, or Bu Shukur as he is also called, appeared earlier than the bard Shahid, who is next mentioned, and prior to the renowned

Rudagi, from both of whom he carried off in advance 'the ball of excellence' — to use a polo phrase from one of his native biographers.¹

One of Shukur's works is recorded as having been written in 941 A.D.,² and among the reliques from his pen is a very early quatrain, which has, as in the case of Hanzalah of Badghis, a special interest for Omarians. Yet there is in the four lines, written on parting from one whom he has loved, something of the bitter-sweet, or rather the *venenum in cauda* sting of a later-day Heine, at least as I read them :

A QUATRAIN BY SHUKUR — BITTER-SWEET

Through grievous pangs for thee I am bowed low ;
'Neath separation's burden bent I go.

But ah ! with hands wash'd of thy guile and wile !
None e'er had moods and whims like thine, I know.³

But on another occasion to his love — and I quote from an out-of-the-way Persian source of nearly a millennium ago — our poet Shukur says that he could never speak an untruth to his beloved, because that 'untruth would fasten his neck into the yoke (*yōgh*).'⁴ There is a touch of personality in it all. And who will fail to put down to Abu Shukur's credit as a bard, that he was the earliest writer to employ in his narrative poetry the *mutakārib*

¹ So Valih, *Riyāz ash-Shu'arā*, as quoted by Ethé, in *Morg. Forsch.* p. 42.

² Ethé, in *Grundr.* 2. 219.

³ For text see Aufi, *Lubāb*, 2. 21 ; Ethé, in *Morg. Forsch.* p. 42. It is worth noting that there are only a half

dozen Arabic words in this quatrain — a proportion which it would be interesting to examine in other quatrain authors.

⁴ Asadi, *Lughat-i Furs*, ed. Horn, fol. 35, p. 56.

meter, which Firdausi later rendered immortal in his epic verse? ¹

Simplicity of style, which is the mark of Shukur's verse, if we may judge from nearly a hundred stray lines that can be gathered here and there from incidental quotation for lexical purposes in a Persian dictionary by Firdausi's nephew, nearly a thousand years ago, was not a quality that made his poetry live among his compatriots.² But we of to-day can at least like one of his simple jingles, because it reminds us of some of our childhood's verse, and be glad that that old-time Persian dictionary-maker quoted Shukur's little lilt to illustrate an unusual word for 'mendicant, pauper,' in the original, instead of the ordinary 'beggar.' The lines are not without *naïveté*:

PAUPER — A BEGGAR

A pauper there was — so Father said,
Who sank ('tis told) to beg his bread;
Dry bread he begged from door to door,
This was his *trade* — forever more!³

True, this is commonplace verse; but brighter shone the rays of another of those minor lights of the past —

Shahid of Balkh, who died some time before 950 A.D., and was mourned in verse by his friend, the renowned poet Rudagi.⁴ Even

¹ Cf. Horn, *Asadi's Lughat-i Furs*, p. 23; id. *Gesch. d. pers. Litt.* p. 68.

² To the references to Abu Shukur by Asadi, add four citations by Shams ibn Kais, *al-Mu'jam*, pp. 268, 277, 383, 439. Shukur's *Āfarīn-nāmah* is lost, cf. Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 1. 466.

³ Asadi, *Lughat-i Furs* (ed. Horn),

fol. 70 r, p. 117; cf. Horn, *Gesch. d. pers. Litt.* p. 68. Other stanzas also of Shukur are quoted in Asadi, e.g. fol. 18 r, 43 r. So likewise lines by Shukur's contemporary, Ma'rufi, cf. Horn, *Asadi*, p. 29 (introduction).

⁴ See Aufi, 2. 3; and cf. Pickering, in *Nat. Rev.* 15. 329, 678, 682.

though we have native authority for the statement that Shahid was a person 'of excellent mind, spirited in conversation, noble in views, and a scholar,'¹ the tinge of melancholy that marks the few verses by which alone we can judge him, has somewhat justly entitled Shahid to be designated 'the pessimist of his century.'² Listen for a moment to the sombre cadence of one of his stanzas, made all the more impressive in its gravity by the alternation in the rhyme :

IF GRIEF HAD SMOKE

If grief had smoke, as hath the blazing fire,
The world would be for aye in darkness blind ;
Travel the world from end to end entire,
A wise man wholly happy thou'lt not find.³

The serious earnestness of another of Shahid's stanzas is similar in spirit, though bizarre in expression :

TWO OF LIFE'S ARTISANS

Two artisans there are, heaven's vault below,
The one doth cut, the other spins with knack ;
The first shapes naught but kings' high caps of show,
While weaves the other naught save sackcloth black.

In a quatrain, earlier than which only one or two exist, as intimated above, Shahid gives voice to a lament over the ruins of the city of Tus in Khurasan, left desolate by the ravages of invading hordes, too oft repeated later from

¹ So after the *Safīnah-i Khvashgū*, cited by Ethé, in *M.F.* p. 43.

² So Darmesteter, *Origines de la poésie persane*, p. 29.

³ Aufi, *Lubāb*, 2. 4, from which text the original rhyme *a b a b* has been

imitated above ; cf. also Ethé, in *M.F.* p. 44 ; Pizzi, *Chrestomathie*, p. 57 ; and tr. Pizzi, *Storia*, 1. 128.

⁴ Text, Ethé, in *M.F.* p. 45 ; Pizzi, *Chr.* p. 57.

over the Turkistan border. Any one who has wandered, as I have, among the crumbling remains of that ancient heap of dust, near modern Mashad, will best appreciate the raven-note of these dismal four lines:¹

RUINED TUS — A QUATRAIN

Last night by ruined Tus I chanced to go,
 An owl sat perched where once the cock did crow;
 Quoth I, "What message from this waste bring'st thou?"
 Quoth he, "The message is, 'Woe, woe — all's woe!'"²

Nature sad or glad sympathizes with the plaint of a lover, and this was Shahid's case when he bemoaned his plight and sang:

A LOVER'S PLAINT

The cloud is weeping like a lover sad,
 The garden smileth like some maiden glad,
 The thunder moaneth, yea, like unto me,
 That make lament each dawn I'm doomed to see.³

A store of world-wisdom — gathered, no doubt, through sad experience — is locked up in the following little jingle by Shahid:

LEARNING AND WEALTH

'Tis with learning and wealth like narcissus and rose,
 At the same time and place neither one of them grows;
 For, where there is learning — well, wealth is not there,
 And where there is wealth — little learning's to spare.⁴

¹ Cf. Jackson, *From Constantinople to the Home of Omar Khayyam*, pp. 286–295.

² Text, Ethé, p. 44; Pizzi, *Chr.* p. 57.

³ Text, Aūfī, 2. 4; cf. Ethé, p. 46. Original rhyme is *b d*.

⁴ Aūfī, 2. 4; cf. Ethé, p. 45. Rhyme in original, *b d*. It may be noted that Shahid was one of the earliest poets to leave a collection of his lyrics in

the form of a *Divān*, cf. Ethé, in *Grundr.* 2. 219. It is also to be observed that in the old Persian dictionary of Asadi, *Lughat-i Furs* (ed. Horn), Shahid is cited some thirty-two times (mostly couplets — one on Lost Youth, fol. 35 r), and among these quotations are four short stanzas (fols. 8, 12, 40, 67); cf. also Shams ibn Kāis, *al-Mu'jam*, p. 204.



THE CRUMBLING MAUSOLEUM AT TUS
(From a photograph by the author)

[*To face page 26*]

Different both in mood and in manner, but not lacking in fancy, was the baker-poet Khabbaz of Nishapur — for Nishapur had its baker-poet as Nürnberg had its shoemaker-bard Hans Sachs. Khabbaz, or Khabbazi, flourished in the middle of the tenth century, as his death is recorded as having occurred in 953 A.D.¹ His name (*Khabbāz*) means ‘Baker,’ and a well-known Persian tradition states that ‘Doctor Khabbaz of Nishapur was skilled in baking choice and fine bread, and was also clever in piercing the pearls of words with the needle of speech.’² Here is one of the strings of pearls for his loved one’s hair:

THOSE TWO TRESSES OF HAIR

Dost see those two tresses of hair,
Which the wind waveth hither and yon?
Thou’dst liken them unto a swain,
Who never hath constancy won.
Nay, like some lord chamberlain’s hand,
For his prince in full martial array,
That waveth thee back from afar, —
‘Thou hast not any audience to-day!’³

The title *Hakīm*, ‘Doctor,’ when brought into connection with the following verse, which is probably by his son Abu Ali Khabbaz, appears to show that the elder Khabbaz combined the practice of medicine with his calling of loaf-making and his avocation as a poet; nor did he lack a sense of humor, if we may judge from the allusion in Khabbaz Junior’s lines:

¹ Cf. Ethé, in *Grundr.* 2. 221.

² Cf. Afi, *Lubāb*, 2. 27.

³ Afi, 2. 27; Ethé, in *M.F.* 50; cf. also Pickering, in *Nat. Rev.* 15. 681.

THE QUACK'S RESPONSE

To Doctor Khabbaz once I gave this counsel pure :

'Take heed no sick man leaves thy door without a cure ;

Hopeful of healing, glad they to thy door repair ;

Let no poor patient, then, depart in sad despair.'

Said Papa, 'Know'st thou not, no fault is mine, my Son.

Wild game whose hour is come, straight to the hunter run.'

¹

To the city of Nishapur belonged likewise Abu 'l-

 Abu 'l-
 Muzaffar Nasr

 Muzaffar Nasr, who had the real touch
 of fancy in his verse, though he is known
 only by the fragmentary stanza that is here rendered :

HER BEAUTY

One might liken her unto the moon, — if not for her tresses so
 black,

Or like unto Venus were she, if her beauteous mole she did lack.

Her radiant cheeks were the sun, I had ventured to say with my
 lips,

If the sun were but never obscured, and never once suffered
 eclipse.²

To the same epoch of song belongs still another
 Samanid minstrel, Junaidi, or Abdullah Muhammad al-
 Junaidi, as his fuller name is given. Junaidi enjoyed an

 Junaidi

 added repute among his contemporaries and
 successors as being — like Abbas of Merv and
 Shahid of Balkh — a master equally of the Arabic and
 of the Persian tongue, and as being skilled likewise in
 the art of composing in prose as well as in verse.³ He

¹ Text from Valih, *Rityāz ash-Shu'arā*, cited by Ethé, in *M. F.* p. 51. rhyme, *b d*. Cf. also tr. Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 1. 467.

Rhyme in original, *b d f*.

³ Cf. Aûfi, *Lubāb*, 2. 23-24 ; Ethé,

² Aûfi, 2. 23 ; Ethé, p. 48. Original p. 49.

certainly was an adept in turning a wine-song (perhaps the earliest extant in Persian), even though my rendering, with its attempt to imitate the Persian monorhyme of his stanzas, only inadequately conveys the idea :

DRINK WINE !

At dawn quaff a draft from the flagon of wine,
 By crow of the cock and the lute's plaintive whine.
 When the sun lifts his head o'er the top of the hill,
 He were best put to blush by the cup and the vine.
 From the cup to the couch at the fall of night time,
 From the couch to the cup at the dayspring's first sign.
 As *milk* is the food that for infants is best,
 So let old men their diet to *grape-milk* confine.¹

Bukhara — that ancient city and capital of the Samanid Empire — was the home of numbers of devotees of song. Their names have lived, and that is a thousand year old tribute. Several of these names should be recorded for fame; and among them may be mentioned now, even if his poetic activity appears to belong only to the middle or the latter part of the Samanid period, the name of a prince of the blood, Aghachi, or Aghaji, or Abu 'l-Hasan Ali b. Ilyas al-Aghaji, of Bukhara — ‘a man of the sword and the pen,’ he was called.² Aghachi was a contemporary both of Shahid and of Dakiki (the latter of whom sang his praises), and must, therefore, have flour-

Aghachi, or
 Aghaji (about
 the Middle of
 Tenth Century
 A.D. and some-
 what Later)

¹ There is a pun in the Persian *shīr*, ‘milk,’ and *shīrah*, ‘new wine’ (milk of the grape). For the text, see Aufr, *Lubāb*, 2. 23; Ethé, p. 49; and cf. tr. Pickering, in *Nat. Rev.* 15. 681.

² Aufr, *Lubāb al-Albāb*, 1. 31-32; Ethé, in *M. F.* pp. 62-63; id. in *Grundr.* 2. 222.

ished about the middle of the tenth century, or even somewhat later.¹

In spirit Aghachi combined the soldier and the poet, and his fiery temper brooked no taunt that stigmatized, as a source of weakness, his court education, in accordance with the regimen of princes; for against the attack he hurled back four biting lines:

A SOLDIER-POET'S EDUCATION

Ho, thou who takest no account of what my skill may be,
 Test!—Thou wilt find I was not reared 'mid luxury abhorred;
 Bring forth the steed, the noose, the bow, and bring the book to me,
 Verse, pen, and lute,—bring on the wine, chess, and backgammon
 board!²

The knightly chivalry of the lover speaks in the next fragment from the writings of this soldier-bard:

LOVE BEYOND COMPARE

Should thy heart require a fortress —
 Fort my heart shall be for thee;
 Since thy love's beyond computing,
 Countless may thy life's years be!³

And the fancy of the true poet is hidden in one other of the half-dozen stanzas by which al-Aghachi is known.⁴ The soldier's imagination is not absent.

¹ As to the date of Aghachi, Ethé, in *Grundr.* 2. 222, evidently inclines to place Aghachi (Aghaji) in the latter half of the tenth century, but has authority for saying 'gehörte zu den Zeitgenossen des Shahid und Dakīkī' (in *M. F.* p. 62); so apparently also Horn, *Gesch. d. pers. Litt.* p. 79; Pizzi, *Storia della poesia persiana*, 1. 69-70, 130. Also look up

Pickering, *Nat. Rev.* 15. 685. I have preferred to treat Aghachi in the present chapter rather than in the one after next.

² Aufi, 1. 32; Ethé, p. 63; Pizzi, *Chr.* p. 59. Original rhyme *b d*.

³ Aufi, 1. 32; Ethé, in *M. F.* p. 62.

⁴ Aufi, 1. 32, has six; Ethé (*M. F.* pp. 62-63) quotes four. Asadi, *Lughat-i Furs*, ed. Horn, cf. p. 17,

A SNOW-FLURRY

Oh, look at the sky with its troops of flaked snow,
 How amid it a flurry of wings is widespread !
 'Tis verily like to a troop of white doves
 Panic-stricken with fear of the falcon so dread.

A few glints more from these minor stars might be recorded, it is true ; but these slender rays shot down from the stellar spaces of the long-forgotten past gleam for an instant, and then are gone. Yet behind them they leave to us a wish, unfulfilled though it must ever remain, that we knew more of the galaxy of which they formed a part in those star-regions of song that are no longer within our ken.

cites ten different single lines (unrhymed) of Āghājī. I am not sure about the quatrain by Āghājī cited by Shams ibn Ḳais, *al-Mu'jam* (in *Gibb Memorial Series*, 10), p. 214. I may

have missed noting others, which some one will doubtless add later.

¹ For text, cf. Aufr, 1. 32 ; Ethé, p. 62 ; Pizzi, *Chr.* p. 59 ; cf. tr. Pickering, *Nat. Rev.* 15. 685 ; Pizzi, *Storia*, 1. 130.

CHAPTER IV

RUDAGI, A HERALD OF THE DAWN

(Middle of the Tenth Century A.D.)

‘ But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o’er the dew of yon high eastern hill.’

— SHAKESPEARE, *Hamlet*, 1. 1. 166–167.

THE dawn had not yet fully broken; but though the Pleiades had set, two morning-stars still lingered in the sky as heralds of the dawn. The more brilliant of the twain, yet earliest to sink beneath the horizon, bore the name Rudagi or Rudaki.¹ The other, hardly less luminous, but quenched before the great sun of Firdausi rose, was called Dakiki. Only snatches of the music of the spheres in which their orbits swung have come down to us, but the notes that reverberate are true and rich.

To Rudagi, the older of these minstrels, as dominating the Samanid era, this chapter is devoted; Dakiki, his later compeer, is reserved for another.

Rudagi may justly be styled the real ‘father of Persian song.’ His birth-year appears to have been somewhere around 880 A.D., and his death must have occurred about 954 A.D.² He owed his name to his natal town Rudag,

¹ When I was in Persia for the fourth time (1918) I heard from literary men only the pronunciation *Rūdakī*, although scholars of the West have more generally adopted (and

there is manuscript authority for it) the reading *Rūdagi*.

² For the view as to the latter date, 954 (= 343 A.H.) as contrasted with 941 (= 330 A.H.), see Ethé, in *Grundr.*

a small place beyond the river Oxus, located near either Bukhara or Samarkand, or possibly between the two.¹ Tradition has it that he was so clever as a Rudagi (about boy that he knew the whole Kuran by heart 880-954 A.D.) at the age of eight.² A presage of his future greatness!

Tradition reports also that, like Homer, Rudagi was born blind; but if so, that makes all the more surprising the sense of color which is shown in the fragments of his poetry that have survived.³ At all events, nature endowed him not only with the gift of poesy, but also with a rich voice for singing and a talent likewise for playing the lute (*barbat*).⁴ The burst of song came early from his lips, and the burden of his light-hearted verse, with its chiming monorhyme, which is here imitated from the Persian original, has all the abandon of

2. 221; although Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 1. 456, n. 2, cites authority for the date 940-941 A.D.; compare furthermore C. J. Pickering, *A Persian Chaucer*, in *National Review*, 15. 329, London, 1890. This latter article, pp. 327-340 (based on Ethé and Darmesteter), became accessible to me after this chapter was ready for the press, but references are added in the footnotes.

¹ The standard monograph on Rudagi is by H. Ethé, *Rūdagi, der Sāmānidendichter*, in *Nachrichten d. Kgl. Gesellsch. d. Wiss. zu Göttingen* (1873), pp. 663-742; see also id. in *Grundr.* 2. 220-221; compare likewise the artistic literary presentation (based on Ethé's material) by Darmesteter, *Origines de la poésie persane*, pp. 11-28. Compare also Pizzi, *Storia della poesia persiana*, 1. 71-74; Horn, *Gesch. d. pers. Litt.* pp. 73-76; Browne,

Lit. Hist. 1. 455-458. For some of the original sources consult also Daulatshah (ed. Browne), pp. 31-33; Aufi, *Lubāb*, 2. 7-9.

² Aufi, cited by Ethé, in *Gött. Nachrichten*, pp. 669-670.

³ On the question of Rudagi's blindness see (with citation of native sources) Ethé, in *Nachrichten*, pp. 668-670; cf. Aufi, *Lubāb* (ed. Browne) 2. 6; also Pickering, *Nat. Rev.* 15. 329, 678, 682. The case probably is that blindness came later in life — there have been blind poets from Thamyris to Milton.

⁴ Compare on *barbat*, Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*, p. 170 a, and the note by Pickering, *Nat. Rev.* 15. 329: '*barbat*, the βαρβιτον of Greece; other authorities give 'ūd, "lute."' Cf. Ethé, in *Nachrichten*, p. 671.

Byron's line, 'I knew it was love, and I felt it was glory,'¹ or of Horace's *Carpe Diem*, as it runs cheerily along in lyric measure :

CARPE DIEM

Live gay with maids dark-eyed, divine!
 'Tis a vain world, and wind is its sign.
 What cometh, thou shouldest rejoice at,
 No thought take of past, or repine.
 I've won me a musky-tressed damsel,
 Moon-faced, and of angel-born line.
 He's happy who giveth and getteth;
 Who doth not, — his lot is of brine.
 This sad world is wind and cloud merely,
 Let be! — Come bring hither the wine!²

Sometimes the tone is a melancholy one, a piteous note of unrequited love.

SHE REGRETS TOO LATE

When dead thou shalt behold me,
 My lips forever sealed,
 Reft of its life this body,
 Passion ne'er more revealed,
 Then by my cold bier sit thou,
 And say with a caress,
 'Alas, 'twas *I* who slew thee!
 Heart-broken, I confess.'³

Our own Chaucer in his youth could not have turned the verse more gracefully — or more sadly.

Fortune early selected Rudagi for her favorite, and led him to the court of the Samanid prince Nasr II

¹ Byron, *Stanzas written on the Road between Florence and Pisa*, l. 16.

² Text, Ethé, in *Nachrichten*, p. 720; Pizzi, *Chr.* p. 61; tr. id. *Storia*, l. 134.

³ Text, Ethé, in *Nachrichten*, p. 737; Pizzi, *Chr.* p. 62; also compare the version by Cowell in Browne, *Lit. Hist.* l. 458.

(913-942), which he graced till his royal patron's death. During these halcyon days honors and riches were showered upon him in abundance; and the retinue of his attendants formed a line of two hundred, while double that number of camels was needed to carry his baggage.¹

Rudagi's
Princely
Patron

In addition to the royal favor of Nasr, Rudagi received generous recognition from his poetic peers, as is proved by his fellow-minstrel and friend, Shahid of Balkh, who said, in a verse which has remained, that 'Bravo!' (*aḥsand*) might be praise for the lines of other poets, but would be mere ridicule for the poems of Rudagi;² and so run the commendations from every Persian singer after him.³

Rudagi's popularity, moreover, with all alike at court (for he was a court poet) and in camp is proved by the story that he was the one selected to try to win Nasr's thoughts back to Bukhara when that Samanid monarch tarried four years away from home, enchanted by the charm of the region around Herat. The bard's ready wit was quick to improvise the means. So well acquainted was he with his royal patron's moods that, as the Persian writers relate, 'he knew prose would not affect him, and therefore had recourse to verse.'⁴ At the moment when

¹ Aufi, 2. 7, and others, cf. Ethé, in *Nachrichten*, p. 672.

² Aufi, *Lubāb* (ed. Browne) 2. 6; and cf. Ethé, in *Gött. Nach.* p. 675, n. 3.

³ References are easily at hand to the scholar (e.g. Ethé, pp. 675-677), and as an illustration of Rudagi's renown might be instanced the fact that he is quoted no less than a hundred and sixty-one times by Asadi,

Lughat-i Furs, cf. ed. Horn, pp. 18-19 — in fact Rudagi is the most often cited author in that work. Similarly in Shams ibn Kaïs, *al-Mu'jam* (in *Gibb Mem.* 10. 451, Index).

⁴ See Nizami-i Aruzi Samarkandi, *Chahār Makāla*, ed. Mīrzā Muḥammad (*Gibb Memorial*, 11), p. 33; tr. Browne, in *JRAS.* 1899, p. 759 (= reprint, p. 53).

Nasr had quaffed his morning cup, 'Rudagi came in and did obeisance, and sat down in his accustomed place; and when the musicians had ceased, he took up the lute (*chang*), and, playing the "Lover's air," began this elegy,' opening with the tender strain,

Būy-i jūy-i Mūliyān āyad hamī

The perfume sweet of Muliyan's stream comes aye to me;
Remembrance, too, of longed-for friends comes aye to me.

Then, striking a lower key, he continued :

THE PRINCE IS TO RETURN TO BUKHARA

The sandy road by Oxus' banks, that rugged way,
Silk-soft beneath my feet to me appears to-day:
And Jihun's waves, for very joy at their friend's face,
Rise to our waists in blithesome mood with fond embrace.
Be joyful, O Bukhara glad! Long live thou!—since
Here to thee joyous comes thy life, thy own glad Prince.
Thy Prince, Bukhara, is the Moon, and thou, the Sky;
In heaven's vault the Moon, behold, is mounting high;
A cypress, he!—Bukhara, thou a garth ablow,
Anon the cypress shall within the garden grow!¹

¹ In the original Persian text of the *Chahār Maqāla* (p. 33) and *Tadhkiratu 'sh-Shu'arā* (p. 32) referred to above (p. 33, n. 1), and oft quoted, the rhyming refrain throughout is *āyad hamī*, 'doth ever come'; so the *alternating* rhyme-lines might perhaps be more literally rendered thus:

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| a. The perfumed Muliyan to me | doth ever come |
| b. Remembrance of my friends to me | doth ever come |
| d. Silk-soft beneath my feet to me | doth ever come |
| f. Waist-high in blithesome mood to me | doth ever come |
| h. In joy thy prince, thy life, to thee | doth ever come |
| j. Into the sky the moon, O see! | doth ever come |
| l. The cypress to his garth, to thee | doth ever come |

For other versions of this noted ode cf. Ethé, p. 719; Darmesteter, p. 13; Browne, in *JRAS.* 1899, p. 760 (= reprint, p. 54); and (though available to me only later for this footnote reference) Pickering, in *Nat. Rev.* (1890), 15. 332.



THE GREAT MINARET OF BUKHARA
(From a photograph by Edward G. Pease)

[To face page 36]

So deeply touched was Amir Nasr, as the story goes, that without waiting to put on his riding-boots he leaped upon the sentry-horse that stood saddled at the gate and never drew rein for eight miles, so that his boots had to be carried after him. The joyful courtiers and soldiers joined in presenting to the successful poet a purse 'of twice five thousand dinars.'¹

To the same Nasr the Fortunate, as his royal patron, are dedicated the few panegyrics that have come down to us from Rudagi. Graceful, but not fulsome, as are so many of such Persian courtly effusions, they show, in equal measure, skill and refined taste, together with true courtly affection.² It is easy, therefore, to understand why Nasr should have bestowed upon his protégé a gift of 40,000 dirhams (about \$7000) for complying with his request for a poetical translation of the famous Indian book, 'The Fables of Bidpai.' This rendering by Rudagi, under the title *Kalīlah and Dimnah*, was made from an Arabic version of the Pahlavi translation of the Sanskrit original which had been brought from India in the time of the Sasanian monarch Khusrau I (Anushirvan the Just), in the sixth century of our era.³ The loss of this

¹ This whole episode is given by Nizami Aruzi of Samarkand, *op. cit.* pp. 31-33; tr. Browne in *JRAS.* 1899, pp. 757-761 (=reprint, pp. 51-55).

² For text and a translation of these *kašīdahs*, see Ethé, in *Gött. Nachrichten*, pp. 678-696; together with a literary appreciation by Darmesteter, pp. 16-18; cf. also Pickering, *Nat. Rev.* 15. 332-335; but Ethé later, in *Grundr.* 2. 220, doubts their authenticity.

³ There is a large mass of material available regarding the original Sanskrit collection of beast-fables, *Pañcatantra*, and its ramifications through Persian and other literatures, a subject which belongs to the special student; consult, e.g. J. Hertel, *Das Pañcatantra*, Leipzig, 1914; G. N. Keith-Falconer, *Kalīlah and Dimnah*, Cambridge, 1885; cf. also Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 1. 110, 275, 457.

Persian rendering is deeply to be regretted, as only about sixteen of its couplets have survived through chance quotations in an eleventh-century lexicographical work.¹

Rudagi's poetic productivity was great. He is reputed to have composed a million and three hundred thousand verses, epic rhapsodies among them.² But of this fabled output only a scanty remnant (not much more than fourscore fragments, together with other stray verses) has been preserved,³ though they are such in merit as to entitle him to a foremost rank among the poets of his century, from whom he received just praise.⁴ His masterly touch in the lyric vein may be illustrated, perhaps, by his songs on wine. Out of a number of such fragments I select one for presentation, the choice being guided by the fact that it is the one best known, and striking for its close, and also because it has been rendered into English by Professor Cowell, the teacher of 'Omar' Fitzgerald.

¹ In the previously mentioned Persian lexicon, Asadi's *Lughat-i Furs*, ed. Horn, pp. 18-21; cf. also Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 1. 457, 474.

² See references by Ethé, in *Gött. Nach.* p. 677; Browne, 1. 456-457.

³ Ethé, in *Gött. Nachrichten*, pp. 678-742, has gathered 52 fragments (making up 240 couplets in all), and to these should now be added the material later available in Asadi's *Lughat-i Furs* (ed. Horn), in which old lexicon Rudagi (the most oft quoted poet) is cited 161 times. The majority of these quotations by Asadi are single rhymed distichs; but among the number I have found 17 short

stanzas (see fols. 6 r, 9 r, 11 r, 21, 24, 27, 30, 32, 33, 35, 40, 42 r, 43 r, 50, 51 r, 61, 71 — two being quatrains, 9 r, 11 r). See also Horn, *op. cit.* pp. 18-19, and observe his remark on the couplets, p. 21. To these likewise should be added a number of other fragments in stanzas now available in Shams ad-Din ibn ẖais, *al-Mu'jam*, ed. Mirzā Muḥammad, *Gibb Memorial*, 10; cf. *Index*, p. 451.

⁴ For appreciations by Rudagi's contemporaries see references above, p. 35, n. 3; also cf. Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 1. 455; and add to them the estimate by Kisa'i in Asadi, *op. cit.* fol. 8 r (ed. Horn, p. 21).

A WINE SONG BY RUDAGI

“Bring me yon wine which thou might'st call a melted ruby in its
cup,
Or like a scimitar unsheathed, in the sun's noon-tide light
held up.
'Tis the rose-water, thou might'st say, yea, thence distilled for
purity;
Its sweetness falls as sleep's own balm steals o'er the vigil-
wearied eye.
Thou mightest call the cup the cloud, the wine the raindrop from
it cast,
Or say the joy that fills the heart whose prayer long looked-for
comes at last.
Were there no wine all hearts would be a desert waste, forlorn
and black,
But were our last life-breath extinct, the sight of wine would
bring it back.
O if an eagle would but swoop, and bear the wine up to the sky,
Far out of reach of all the base, who would not shout 'Well
done!' as I?"¹

— Translation by Edward Byles Cowell.

A dozen other lyric fragments might be added — sometimes an elegy, sometimes a eulogy, sometimes a lover's plaint.² No one knew better than Rudagi, for example, how to portray the pangs of separation from the beloved, and the joys of reunion with the idol of his heart. Here is a rhapsody which I translate because it tells the tale:

¹For this rendering by the late Professor Cowell, see Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 1. 457-458; for the Persian text (with translation) see Ethé, pp. 722-723; cf. id. *Die höfische . . . Poesie*, pp. 14-15; cf. also Pickering, in *Nat. Rev.* 15. 335.

²Translations of some of these lyric effusions, besides those which I have rendered in this chapter, will be found in the articles, already referred to, by Ethé, Darmesteter, Pickering, and in Pizzi, *Storia della poesia persiana*, 1. 131-135.

REUNION AFTER SEPARATION FROM HIS BELOVED

Of the pangs of separation I have suffered and borne more
 Than, through all the distant ages, any mortal being bore;
 And my heart had quite forgotten all the charms of union sweet;
 But what joy 'tis after severance, with one's idol dear, to meet!

So I turned me back in gladness, back unto the camp and tent,
 Light in spirits, and light-hearted, and my speech with lightness
 blent;

For there came enthralled to meet me — yet with bosom all unbraced —
 A sweet maid with a cypress figure, tresses flowing to her waist.

'How hath fared thy heart without me?' 'twas with coquetry she
 said,

'Yea, and how thy soul without me?' did she add, while blushing red.

Then I spake and gave her answer, 'O thou face of heavenly birth,
 My soul's ruin, mischief-maker of all beauties on this earth!
 Snared is my world in the circle of thy locks as amber sweet,
 And 'tis caught like a ball with the mall-bat through thy curving
 ringlets neat!¹

Deeply filled am I with anguish by those eyes which arrows dart,
 I am anguished by those tresses, which rich showers of musk
 impart.

Where were night without the moonbeam? where were day without
 the sun?

Where the rose that hath no water? where the mead that rain doth
 shun?'

Then my bosom grew sweet through toying with her hyacinthine
 hair,

And my lips were sugared through kisses from that coral mouth so
 fair;

Now was she the ruby-buyer, and the ruby-seller I,

While the nectarous wine she poured me, and I drained the goblet
 dry.²

¹The ringlets are compared to the curved head of a polo-stick — a simile found elsewhere in Persian poetry.

²For text see Ethé, in *Gött. Nach-*

richten (1873), pp. 712-713. The rhyme in the original is *a b d f h*, etc. Cf. also tr. Pickering, pp. 336-337.

With a passionate love like Rudagi's, the kiss, which alone can bring relief to the heart, is a divine boon that merits God's benison. So he whispers to his sweetheart:

THE KISS AND GOD'S BENISON

Free my soul from pain and torment
With but kisses two or three;
And that gracious favor's guerdon
Allah's benison will be!¹

Vain limit! Rudagi gives the reason in rhythm if not in rhyme:

KISSES BITTER-SWEET

Kār-i būsah chū āb khvardan shūr
Bi-khvarī bēsh tishnahtar gardī.

'Tis with kisses as with drinking of water that is salt,
The more you drink the thirstier still you grow!²

A whimsical quatrain by Rudagi in a humorous vein is worth translating — for the Persians have a quaint vein of humor. Somebody had twitted him on his vanity in dyeing his hair as he grew old.³ He promptly responds in a *rubāʿī*:

A QUATRAIN ON DYEING THE HAIR

Not for this reason, black my hair I dye,
To look more young and vices new to try;
People in time of grief don raiment black —
I black my hair in grief at old age nigh.⁴

¹ Text, Ethé, p. 742; cf. Darmesteter, *Origines*, p. 20.

² References as in preceding note.

³ It is thought that the original rebuke was made by Rudagi's contemporary, Abu Tahir Khusravani, who, like Kisa'i on the same subject, is mentioned in the next chapter (p. 51). Khusravani's jingling four lines

I render (see text, Pizzi, *Chr.* p. 64; cf. also Pickering, pp. 821-822):

A wonder I count it that men in old age,

To dyeing their hair should be fain;
By dyeing they cannot 'scape dying at all,

But give themselves trouble in vain!

⁴ Text, Ethé, in *Gött. Nach.* p. 739.

Perhaps there was more in the last line of this quatrain than we know. The lightheartedness of youth seems to have gone, especially after the loss of his friend and admirer, the poet Shahid, whom he mourned in touching verse; and Rudagi had apparently fallen on evil days. Nasr, his royal patron, was dead (d. 942); and poverty lent an added pang to the distress of advancing years. The same cry which was uttered a century earlier in Anglo-Saxon by the old English poet Cynewulf, and has been echoed in the silence of the night by myriads since life began, broke forth from Rudagi's soul in a lamentation over the fleeting joys of youth and the sorrows of approaching decay. This elegy of Rudagi's, the opening lines of which still show a flash of grim humor in their realism, deserves to be rendered in full, even if present-day taste would excise several of the verses.

RUDAGI'S LAMENT IN OLD AGE

Every tooth, ah me! has crumbled, dropped and fallen in decay!
 Tooth it was not, nay say rather, 'twas a brilliant lamp's bright ray;
 Each was white and silvery-flashing, pearl and coral in the light,
 Glistening like the stars of morning or the raindrop sparkling bright;
 Not a one remaineth to me, lost through weakness and decay.
 Whose the fault? 'Twas surely Saturn's planetary rule,' you say.
 No, the fault of Saturn 'twas not, nor the long, long lapse of days;
 'What then?' I will answer truly: 'Providence which God displays.'

Ever like to this the world is,—ball of dust as in the past,
 Ball of dust for aye remaining, long as its great law doth last.
 That same thing which once was healing, may become a source of
 pain;
 And the thing that now is painful, healing balm may prove again—

Time, in fact, at the same moment bringeth age where once was youth,

And anon rejuvenateth what was gone in eld, forsooth.

Many a desert waste existeth where was once a garden glad ;

And a garden glad existeth where was once a desert sad.

Ah, thou moon-faced, musky-tressed one, how canst thou e'er know or deem

What was once thy poor slave's station,—how once held in high esteem ?

On him now thy curling tresses, coquettish thou dost bestow,

In those days thou didst not see him, when his own rich curls did flow.

Time there was when he in gladness, happy did himself disport,

Pleasure in excess enjoying, though his silver store ran short ;

Always bought he in the market, countless-priced above the rest,

Every captive Turki damsel with a round pomegranate breast.

Ah! how many a beauteous maiden, in whose heart love for him reigned,

Came by night as pilgrim to him, and in secret there remained !

Sparkling wine and eyes that ravish, and the face of beauty deep,

High-priced though they might be elsewhere, at my door were ever cheap.

Always happy, never knew I what might be the touch of pain,

And my heart to gladsome music opened like a wide champaign.

Many a heart to silk was softened by the magic of my verse,

Yea, though it were hard as flintstone, anvil-hard, or even worse.

Ever was my keen eye open for a maid's curled tresses long,

Ever alert my ear to listen to the word-wise man of song.¹

House I had not, wife nor children, no, nor female family-ties,

Free from these and unencumbered have I been in every wise.

Rudagi's sad plight in old age, Sage, thou verily dost see ;

In those days thou didst not see him as this wretch of low degree.

In those days thou didst not see him when he roved the wide world o'er,

Songs enditing, chatting gaily, with a thousand tales and more.²

¹ There is an allusion to the minstrel or poet in *mardum-i sukhun-dān*, 'the man who knows the value of words.'

² Darmesteter, p. 25, sees in the

words *hazār dastān* a reference by Rudagi to his *Kalilah and Dimnah*, which was one of the sources of the famous '*Thousand and one Nights*.'

Time there was when that his verses broadcast through the whole
world ran,

Time there was when he all-hailed was, as the bard of Khurasán.

Who had greatness? Who had favor, of all people in the land?

I it was, had favor, greatness, from the Saman scions' hand;

Khurasán's own Amir, Nasr, forty thousand dirhams gave,

And a fifth to this was added by the Prince of the Pure and Brave;¹

From his nobles, widely scattered, came a sixty thousand more;

Those the times when mine was fortune, fortune good in plenteous
store.

Now the times have changed,—and I, too, changed and altered
must succumb,

Bring the beggar's staff here to me; time for staff and scrip has
come!²

Thus in dark shadows and deep sorrow closed the final
days of Rudagi's life. The strings of his lute were
hushed, the echoes of his voice were stilled. Who would
follow to catch up the lost strains once more and sweep
the silenced chords again?

¹ This line is a difficult one. Ethé (p. 702, and cf. n. 1) renders it, 'Und der Frommenseelenfürsten Vierzahl zählte einen mehr'; similarly also Pickering, p. 338, and cf. n. 5. This rendering implies that by his generosity Nasr became 'a fifth Caliph,' i.e. on an equality with the first four Caliphs of Islam. But the interpretation seems

strained. I prefer to regard the allusion as being to some one of the Abbasid Caliphs of Rudagi's time. So, in the main, Pizzi, *Storia*, 1. 134.

² For text, Ethé, pp. 696-699; Pizzi, *Chr.*, pp. 59-61; cf. tr. Pizzi, *Storia*, 1. 133-134; Pickering, pp. 337-338. Original monorhyme *a b d*, etc. (Pers. -ān būd throughout).

CHAPTER V

SNATCHES OF MINSTREL SONG

FROM THE LATER SAMANID PERIOD TO THE ERA OF MAHMUD
OF GHAZNAH

(The Latter Half of the Tenth Century A.D.)

‘Hushed is the harp — the minstrel gone.’

— SCOTT, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, 5. 31. 13.

RUDAGI was in his grave; he had joined the choir of singers now silent in the tomb. But the voice of minstrelsy never dies. The far-famed dynasty of the Samanids, in their capital at Bukhara, continued to foster the art of song down to the very close of their rule at the end of the tenth century, and handed it on as a treasured heritage to their successors at the Ghaznavid Court in the eleventh century of our era. Thus to the patron-favor of the last Samanid princes and to the new hopes kindled by the rising sun of Mahmud of Ghaznah’s power, most of the minstrels of those days owed inspiration for their song.

The verses of the bards whose poetry lent tints to the rainbow-arch that spanned this later Samanid period, varied in hue and shade; but the prismatic colors can all be made out undimmed down to the bright era when Mahmud of Ghaznah (a city still existing in Afghanistan) mounted the throne. This famous conqueror’s seat was

near that bag of gold which is fabled to be found at the rainbow's base; and, being somewhat of a poet himself, he joined in doling out the aureate metal to encourage minstrelsy, especially to those bards who chanted his praises in glowing verse.

Among those whose poetry spanned this period was Abu Ishak (or Abu'l-Hasan) of Merv, better known as Kisa'i, 'the Man of the Cloak,' from his donning in later life the dervish garb of the Sufi. Kisa'i had in his voice tones both grave and gay, which served to link the strains of the passing age with the newer music of the coming era.¹ His death is generally supposed to have occurred about the year 1002 or 1003 A.D., but there are grounds now for believing that he outlived considerably the elegiac plaint to which he gave utterance in a poem, written about this time, on reaching the half century in life's run, as referred to below.²

Whatever may have been the date of Kisa'i's death, flowers should have been planted on his grave, because, like Keats, he had for flowers the true love of a poet. A stanza that survives from his pen would suffice to prove this. They are lines on the blue lotus or water-lily of the Nile. Who can say whether Kisa'i's wanderings may not have led him in fact as well as in fancy to the borders of

¹ A number of the poetic fragments of Kisa'i have been preserved by Aûfi, *Lubāb* (ed. Browne), 2. 33-39: over sixty single verses of Kisa'i, moreover, are separately quoted by

Asadi (ed. Horn, cf. p. 27) including a couplet, fol. 36 r, and cf. 60, 60 r; see likewise Shams ibn Kais, *al-Mu'jam* (*Gibb Mem.* 10), p. 272.

² See p. 49 below; and on the

Egypt's stream? I render the lines, at all events, as an expression of his poetic mood:

THE BLUE LOTUS OF THE NILE

The azure water-lily see, amidst the waters blue,
 Now like a burnished gleaming sword, now tinged with sapphire
 hue;
 Color like heaven, and like the heaven, as radiantly bright,
 But cup all yellow, as is the moon a fortnight old in light;
 Yet like a sallow pious monk during a full year's fast
 Wearing from head to foot blue robes, with merit pure amassed.¹

Nor again could any minstrel sing the beauty of the
 rose in verses more quaint than those which I next trans-
 late, for they seem to rival many a later longer rhapsody
 that came from the bards of Shiraz chanting the charms
 of that queen of flowers when every petal was abloom.

THE ROSE

The rose — a rich gift, angel-brought from Paradise!
 In midst of rose-delights, man's soul more noble grows.
 Ah, rose-seller! How canst the rose for silver sell,
 Or what for silver buy more precious than the rose?²

question of the date of Kisa'i's death, consult Ethé, *Neupersische Litteratur*, in Geiger and Kuhn, *Grundriss*, 2. 281; and see Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 2. 161.

¹ Text, Aufi, 2. 35; Ethé, *Die Lieder des Kisā'i*, in *Sitzb. d. bayer. Akad. Wiss. zu München*, 1874, p. 144. The rhyme in the original Persian is *b d f*; and the image in the last two lines might be more literally rendered: 'As the wayfaring monk, whose two cheeks are sallow [through fasting] a year and a month, Has made his upper and lower garment of blue stuff.' For another translation into English consult Pickering, *The Last Singers*

of Bukhara, in *National Review*, 15. 818, London, 1890. Throughout the present chapter I have enjoyed the advantage of consulting Dr. Pickering's essay, which, though published long ago, and based on Ethé and Darmesteter, was not accessible to me before.

² For the Persian text see Aufi (ed. Browne), 2. 35-36; also Ethé, *Sitzb. d. bayer. Akad.* 1874, p. 145, and Pizzi, *Chr.* p. 63. Cf. also Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 2. 164; Pickering, p. 818; Darmesteter, p. 46; Horn, *Gesch. d. pers. Litteratur*, p. 77, Leipzig, 1901.

To every reader of that stanza by Kisa'i there will involuntarily recur a later reminiscence in Omar Khayyam's lines, when, in quite a different tone, Omar expresses marvel regarding the wine-sellers of Nishapur:

I wonder only what the vintners buy
One half so precious as the stuff they sell.¹

It is not surprising, therefore, that so refined a literary critic of Persian poetry as the French scholar Darmesteter should add: 'If the rose had had to choose between these four pretty verses of Kisa'i and the interminable dithyrambs of Hafiz, I believe that she would have said without hesitation to Hafiz: "The rose loves better a single note of the nightingale than all the gardener's songs."'²

Light-hearted in its spirit is the following musical message which Kisa'i caught from the carol of a bird.

THE BIRD'S MESSAGE

Yon caroling little bird a singer is,
Giving a message like a lover to his love;
What sings he? Sings, 'Beloved, the night hath flown,
Take thou thy sweetheart's hand and in the garden rove.'³

In still another vein—that of the panegyric—is a brief eulogy lauding the new monarch Mahmud of Ghaznah, sovereign lord of Afghanistan, whose succession to the throne marked the year 998 A.D., and the sweep of whose conquering sword soon brought under his sway a large part of Persia and much of Northwestern India. Sad though Kisa'i may have been at the setting sun of

¹ So likewise, Browne, 2. 164.

Sitzb. 1874, p. 148; Pizzi, *Chr.* p. 64;

² Darmesteter, *Les Origines*, p. 46.

and cf. Pickering, p. 820.

³ For the text see Aufr, 2. 36; Ethé,

the Samanid rule, he may nevertheless have felt glad, like other poets of the hour, at the dawn of the rising Ghaznah day. Doubtless for that reason he hailed the upshoot of its beams in these somewhat extravagant lines, praising the newly enthroned monarch (as translated by Pickering):

TO MAHMUD OF GHAZNAH

“O Shâh, we well may call thy hand a jewel mine,
For thence thou scatterest gems in never-ceasing shower;
Though God hath made thy soul of bounty and noblesse,
How, when that soul is spent, to breathe hast yet the power?”

— Translation by C. J. Pickering.¹

But fulsome praise and bombast were the fashion of such an hour!

On reaching his fiftieth year, all that may have been blithe and debonair in Kisa'i's verse gave place to a sombre note. In a long *kaşîdah*-lament he tells mournfully, like bards before and after him, of the lost joys of youth, and recalls in sadness the fifty years over which he looked backward only with regret to the day when first he saw the light, that date being equivalent to Wednesday, March 16, 953 A.D.² These despondent verses were composed, according to Aufi, the earliest biographer of the Persian poets, ‘at the end of his life, the time of farewell, and the hour of departure.’³ If, however, as more modern scholars have reason to believe, he lived long past the

¹ See Pickering, in *National Review*, 15. 818; and for the original text, Aufi, 2. 34; Ethé, in *Sitzb. d. bayer. Akad.* 1874, p. 142.

² For the original text of this lament see Aufi, 2. 38-39; and also Pizzi, *Chr.* pp. 62-63; Ethé, *Sitzb.* 1874, pp.

135-136; and for a translation see Browne, 2. 163-164; Pickering, p. 819; Pizzi, *Storia*, 1. 135.

³ Aufi, *Lubāb*, ed. Browne, 2. 38; and cf. Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 2. 161 (but see p. 163); Pickering, p. 819.

age of fifty, it may have been at this moment, with death's grim visage in his view, that he donned the dervish robe with which his name *Kisā'ī* has ever been associated, and, like a Hindu Yogi, gave himself up to the ascetic life, calmly awaiting release through death.¹

There is so much that is human in such personal expressions that our hearts cannot but sympathize with a melancholy touch in some of the fragmentary
Khusravani verses of another Samanid poet. Khusravani, 'the Royal,' was his pseudonym—perhaps a laureate title—his full name being Abu Tahir bin Muhammad. To this was attached the cognomen *aṭ-ṭabīb*, 'physician,' or, according to another reading, *aṭ-ṭayyib*, 'the sweet.' If we had more than the four or five poetic specimens that have come down to us, we might find a brighter tinge, as there are reasons for believing that his poems possessed it.² But here is one in the sombre tone among those that have been preserved. Fallen into dire illness, it seems, Khusravani vents his spleen against four sorts of men who bring him not an atom of comfort, namely, physicians, priests, astrologers, and charm-mongers.

FOUR SORTS OF USELESS MEN

For me four sorts of men as types of weakness stand,
 Since not a whit of help comes from the four :

¹ This latter is the view of Browne, 2. 163, following the deductions of Ethé, in *Sitzb.* 1874, pp. 133–153.

² For the text and a German translation of these fragments see Ethé, in *Sitzb.* 1873, pp. 654–658. There are

some twenty-five single-line quotations from Khusravani in Asadi, *Lughat-i Furs* (ed. Horn, cf. p. 23), but the only rhyming lines I note are fol. 17 r, 21 r.

The leech, the priest, star-wizard, and the sorcerer,
With drug, prayer, horoscope, and with spell-lore.¹

In another four lines Khusravani bemoans, like Rudagi and Kisa'i, the coming of gray hair, and inveighs against dyeing the whitening locks, because of its futility in avoiding the advance of age.² That particular stanza has been translated above (p. 41, n. 3), but there is a special reason for quoting here two other lines of Khusravani on vanished youth, because they are immortalized in an elegiac plaint by Firdausi, who, when looking back over what seemed to be lost work of more than sixty years upon the Shah-namah, and disappointed in his hopes, cried out in anguish of heart that Khusravani had once truly said,

My youth I recall from the days of my childhood ;
Alas for my youth ! Ah, alas, for my youth !

or as the original runs :

*Juvānī man az kūdakī yād dāram ;
Darīghā juvānī ! Darīghā juvānī !*³

There is much of the same minor chord in the sad verses of another minstrel, Abu Nasr of Gilan, a native of that province southwest of the Caspian Sea. The lament of this seemingly lost soul is once more 'Alas !' The lines, which I here versify, tell only of the past joys of youth that are vainly recalled, never to return.

Abu Nasr
of Gilan

¹ For text see Aūfi, 2. 20 ; Pizzi, *Chr.* p. 64 ; Ethé, *Sitzb.* 1873, p. 656 ; and cf. tr. Darmesteter, p. 34 ; Pickering, p. 821.

² For text, Ethé, *Sitzb.* 1873, p. 658 ; Pizzi, p. 64 ; tr. Pickering, p. 821 ; and see above, p. 41, n. 3.

³ The verses of Firdausi's plaint, which cite Khusravani's verse, are quoted by Aūfi, *Lubāb*, 2. 33 ; cf. Ethé, *Sitzb.* 1872, p. 299 ; also Pizzi, *Chr.* pp. 64, 65 ; and Browne, 2. 147.

MEMORY OF YOUTH

Like a cloud in spring or wind in autumn blown,
 My youthful days from out my hand have flown.
 Here have I sat, how oft, in happy days,
 Body relaxed, heart glad, cheek ruddy grown,
 Ear never free from minstrels' roundelays,
 Nor hand without the Magian wine-cup known.¹
 Thus to youth's memories back my heart now strays,
 'Alas my youth! my youth alas!' I moan.²

Some fragments of other minstrels of the Samanid period and the Bukharan court have been preserved, but they are likewise only *disjecta membra*, and there is space here merely to say something about two of their number, although simply snatches of their verses have come down to us.³ The one of these is Umarah, the other is Muntasir.

Umarah of Merv flourished in the latter part of the tenth century and in the time of Mahmud of Ghaznah, whom he eulogizes.⁴ He is reported to have been an astronomer of high repute (therefore a forerunner of Omar Khayyam), but it is not through science that his name is known; it is through the frag-

¹ The Magians were tolerant in regard to the temperate use of wine, which was forbidden by Muhammadan law. Cf. below, p. 62, n. 1.

² For text see Ethé, in *Sitzb.* 1873, p. 658, and cf. id. in *Grundr. d. iran. Philol.* 2. 223 note; cf. also tr. Pickering, p. 822; Pizzi, *Storia*, p. 130. The monorhyme in the original Persian is *a b d f h*.

³ Fragments of some of the poets alluded to, like Faralavi, Abu'l-Abbas, Ma'navi of Bukhara, Abu'l-Masal, Zarrah of Gurgan, Raunaki, Muvay-

yad, Abu'l-Fath, are found in Aufi and cited by Ethé, Browne, and Pickering, besides chance citations from others by Asadi, etc. A new monograph on this entire subject would be worth while.

⁴ Cf. Aufi, 2. 24; Ethé, in *Morg. Forsch.* p. 64; Pickering, pp. 685, 686. I am not sure on what authority Horn (Asadi, *Lughat*, p. 24) gives the year 'A.H. 360' (= 970-971 A.D.) as the date of Umarah's death; the statement of Aufi, 2. 24, implies that he lived till Ghaznavid times.

ments of his verses, some of which have a madrigal turn and a vein of real imagination. A number of these poetic snatches of song have been preserved from oblivion through having been quoted, seven centuries ago, by Aufi, in the earliest extant biography of Persian poets.¹ It is from that source that some of the specimens are here translated. This, for instance, to his sweetheart might serve as a prototype for a modern love-missive sent on St. Valentine's Day!

A VERSE TO HIS SWEETHEART

I should like to be one of my words,
Slyly hidden among them in bliss,
So when thou would'st sing it I might
Imprint on thy sweet lip a kiss.²

The story goes that in after days the renowned mystic poet Abu Sa'id, who is mentioned below, once heard these lines, and when he learned that they were by Umarah, he said to a group of his disciples, 'Arise, let us make a visitation to his grave.'³

Here is a quatrain which shows that Umarah had no scruples about indulging in the juice of the grape.

THE WINE-CUP

See in my silvern idol's hand the wine,
Thou'dst say the sun and moon together shine;
That cup on which the wine its shadow casts
Is a white rose-leaf joined with a tulip fine.⁴

Again the wine-cup gives rise to a pretty conceit:

¹ See Aufi, *Lubāb al-Albāb*, ed. Browne, 2. 24-26; Ethé, in *Morg. Forsch.* pp. 63-68. In Asadi's *Lughat* (cf. ed. Horn, p. 24) there are references to some forty single-line quotations from Umarah, but no stanzas.

² Cf. Ethé, p. 64; Darmesteter, p. 57; Pickering, p. 686; Pizzi, *Storia*, 1. 130; id. *Chr.* p. 59.

³ For references see note 2.

⁴ For text see Aufi, 2. 25; Ethé, p. 66; Pizzi, *Chr.* p. 59.

FIRE AND WATER COMMINGLE!

Hast ever seen — O marvelous — water and fire combine?
 Just cast thine eye upon this cup and then upon the wine,
 Cup crystal clear — all red the wine, within this goblet single;
 Acknowledge now, thou hast beheld water and fire commingle.¹

Graver in tone is this stanza, and fitting in its application to the old adage that pride goes before destruction in this fickle world:

BEWARE OF PRIDE

Be thou not proud e'en though the world hath chanced to make thee great;
 Many the great ones whom the world brings swift to low estate.
 This world's a snake, — a charmer he, who seeks in his power to bring;
 The charmer oft-times from the snake receives a mortal sting.²

The line of the Samanids died with a song upon a prince's lips. The last heir to the now decadent throne **Muntasir**, of Bukhara, Abu Ibrahim Ismail, who is better known as Muntasir, strove in vain to hold on his head the crown of the effete dynasty which was falling from his grasp.³ It seems odd to think that this youthful warrior, 'most of whose life was spent in flight and fight' (*dar gurīkhtan u āvīkhtan*), should have been a poet besides.⁴ Day and night he was on horseback, and

¹ In the original Persian of this stanza only the second and fourth verses rhyme (*bd*), cf. Aufr, 2. 25; Ethé, p. 66.

² Aufr, 2. 25; and cf. Ethé, p. 65; Browne, 1. 467.

³ See Ethé, in *Grundr.* 2. 222; id. *Die höfische . . . Poesie*, p. 24, in both of which places the date of Muntasir's death is given as 1005 A.D., while Horn, in *Grundr.* 2. 562, and

also Pickering, p. 823, both give the end of the year 1004 A.D.; the difference depends simply upon the question in which part of the Muhammadan month Rabi I, 395 A.H., the event occurred (cf. Mustaufi, *Ta'rikh-i Guzīdah*, tr. Browne, in *Gibb Mem.* 14. 2, p. 78).

⁴ So Aufr 1. 293 (ed. Browne), and cf. Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 1. 468; Pickering, p. 823.

must have formed a picturesque figure clad in a cloak of coarse white cloth, which seems to have served alike as a protecting mail and an inspiration to the devoted followers who attended him in the guerilla warfare which he maintained against inroading Tatar bands from beyond the Oxus as well as against the rising Ghaznavid power. On one occasion, relates Aufi, the early thirteenth century biographer of Persian poets, a group of his companions, faithful amid the vicissitudes of fortune and misfortune, asked him: 'O King, why dost thou not deck thyself out in fine robes and beguile thyself with instruments of music, which are among the outward signs of royalty?'¹ The regal scion of the Samanid House may, at this moment, have reined in his steed and grasped a pen from the *ḵalamdān*-box of one of his scribes, but at any rate there came from his lips a stern rebuke in verse:

THE WARRIOR-POET

They say to me, 'Why not adopt a face of merry cheer,
A house adorned with carpets rare, with many hues bedecked?'

Can I, 'midst warriors' shouts and cries, the voice of minstrels
hear?

Can I, 'midst charging steeds in fight, the rose-bower sweet elect?
What place can be for the gush of wine and Saki's luscious lips,
When blood must gush in streams by which the corselet mail is
flecked?

My steed and arms the banquet-hall and rose-garth far eclipse;
For lance and bow, the tulip fair and lily I reject!²

¹ Cf. Browne, 1. 468; Pickering, p. 823.

² I have followed the rhyme of the original, *b d f h*. For the text see Ethé, *Sitzb.* 1874, pp. 150-151; Pizzi, *Chr.*

p. 64; cf. also tr. Ethé, *Die höfische . . . Poesie*, p. 24; Darmesteter, pp. 52-53; Pickering, p. 823; Browne, 1. 469; Pizzi, *Storia*, 1. 136.

The end of Muntasir's romantic career was tragic. He was treacherously murdered, in 1005, by an outlaw band with whom he had taken refuge in flight from the Tatar lord Ilak Khan, but he had lived true to the heroic and poetic traditions of the House of Saman.¹

The glory of the Samanid sun which had shone so brilliantly during the tenth century, especially at the capital city of Bukhara, did not set without having given inspiration to other singers, some of whose voices still continued to be heard in the early part of the Ghaznavid period. The names, in fact, of several of the minstrels mentioned in this chapter belong in part to that later era as well.² Then, too, while it is true that the literary supremacy of the Samanids, which lasted down to about 1000 A.D., was paramount in Northeastern Persia and in Transoxiana, poetry was not confined to these realms alone. The poetic art was cultivated likewise at the Dailamite court of the House of Buwaih, which, during a large part of the century, dominated the southern and

A Buwaihīd southwestern provinces, with power reaching
Poet even as far as Baghdad.³ A panegyric, for

example, by a Buwaihīd poet, Mantiki of Rai, eulogizing his patron Sahib Ismail (936–995 A.D.), who was minister under two successive Buwaihīd rulers and himself the author of an Arabic dictionary, has been preserved. It is fantastic enough in its exaggerated hyper-

¹ On the date '1005,' see p. 54, though the latter has been treated in n. 3. chapter 3.

² So, for example, Kisa'i and Umarah, and possibly Aghachi, al-

³ Cf. Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 1. 360, 364, 365, 367, 374 ; 2. 93.

bole, but is not without imagination, as shown by Professor E. G. Browne's rendering :

A PANEGRIC

"Methinks the Moon of Heav'n is stricken sore,
And nightly grieveth as it wasteth more.
What late appeared a great, round, silver shield,
Now like a mall-bat¹ enters heaven's field.
The Šāhib's horse, you 'd think, had galloped by,
And cast one golden horse-shoe in the sky."

— *Translation by Edward G. Browne.*²

Not only the Buwaihids but also the enlightened House of the Ziyarids in the Caspian province of Tabaristan (corresponding to the modern Gilan and Mazandaran, south of the Caspian Sea) encouraged literary and learned men. One of these rulers was the Ziyarid prince, Kabus, who, besides being a generous patron of letters, composed some poems himself.³ But among his titles to renown as a patron is the protection which he gave to the famous physician, philosopher, and poet, Ibn Sina, or Avicenna, as he is known so well to Europe and the West, who was born near Bukhara in 980 A.D. Avicenna's fame, even while he was a young man, led Mahmud to seek to bring him to his capital at Ghaznah as one of the great lights of the time, but he fled from the monarch's bidding and at last found refuge at the court of Kabus, where he was long hospitably entertained, and he later died (1037 A.D.) at Hamadan, in which city his tomb may still

**The Ziyarids
as Patrons**

¹ A resemblance is seen between the crescent of the moon and the curved head of a polo-stick.

² Browne, 1. 463 ; and cf. id. 1. 374, 453.

³ Cf. Browne, 1. 469-471.

be visited.¹ A consideration of the poems left by this far-famed scholar, however, as well as of the quatrain-verses of his contemporary and friend Abu Sa'id, the noted mystic poet (967-1049), is reserved for another volume according to the plan adopted in this series.²

Yet a special chapter, the following, belongs to one other poet, whose name adds lustre to the latter half of the Samanid period; it is the renowned Dakiki, the forerunner of Firdausi in the realm of Epic Poetry. Dakiki has left more than snatches of song, and it is to this worthy pioneer of Firdausi that we shall next turn.

¹ See Jackson, *Persia Past and Present*, pp. 165-167.

² See Preface, p. vii.

CHAPTER VI

DAKIKI

(In the Latter Half of the Tenth Century A.D.)

‘The herald that dropped dead in announcing the victory, in whose fruits he was not to share.’

—LOWELL, *Lecture on Marlowe*, in *Old English Dramatists*, p. 54.

A YOUTH, generally known as Dakiki, whose pulses, like Marlowe's, were aflame, and whose raptures were all fire, received the coveted gift from the Muses. The lover's lute was his; wine, woman, and song were his favorite themes. Yet Dakiki's renown rests rather on the fact that the few bugle notes which he had just begun to sound in epic poetry made him the herald of Firdausi. Almost at the very moment when he had given the call, an assassin's dagger cut short his life at an early age, in the latter quarter of the tenth century of our era.

Dakiki's home is commonly thought to have been Tus, the native place of his great successor Firdausi, though some sources allow Bukhara and Samarkand likewise to share in the claim of having nurtured his genius.¹ In any event he was, like the other early poets, a child of Eastern Iran; and this is borne out by the fact that some of the fragments of his verse are stanzas

¹ Nöldeke, *Das iranische Nationalepos*, in *Grundriss der iranischen Philologie*, 2. 147-150.

in praise of two of the last Samanid rulers, Mansur I (961–976 A.D.) and his son Nuh II (976–997).¹

This latter statement seems to be correct from the fact that Mustaufi (1330 A.D.) expressly says that Dakiki was ‘the contemporary of Amir Nuh (II) the Samanid’ (976–997), and it is in accordance with the accepted tradition that Nuh II assigned to him the task of writing the national legend of Iran in verse.² In view of this it may be inferred that Dakiki lived beyond the year 975 A.D., which has been assigned for his death, although he may have met his end early in Nuh’s reign.³

With regard to his poetical name, all of Dakiki’s verses, panegyric and lyric, are so well turned that he deservedly merits the title *Dakikī*, or ‘the Subtle,’ by which literary designation he is commonly known. The full form of his real name, however, was Abu Mansur Muhammad bin Ahmad, which preceded it.

From the last stanza of one of Dakiki’s impassioned odes, in which, after Persian fashion, he inserts his literary title, we may gain some insight into the delights that most charmed his heart. After chanting the beauties of spring, he concludes this lyrical effusion with these four lines :

DAKIKI’S CHOICE

Of all things good and evil in the world,
Dakiki’s choice is given to these four :—

¹ Cf. Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 1. 461; Nöldeke, in *Grundr.* 2. 147.

² See Mustaufi, *Ta’rīkh-i Guzīdah*, tr. Browne, in *JRAS.* 1900, p. 750 (= reprint, p. 30); id. ed. in *Gibb Mem.* 14. 1, p. 818; tr. 14. 2, p. 224;

and Khvashgu’s *Safīnah*, referred to by Ethé in *Morg. Forsch.* p. 57. Cf. also Pickering, in *Nat. Rev.* 15. 683.

³ There seems to be a slight inconsistency in the statements of Browne, 1. 372; 2. 116; and 1. 123, 460–461.

The ruby lip, the lute's sad melody,
The blood-red wine, and Zoroaster's lore.¹

Even if the allusion to the religion of Zoroaster need not be taken too seriously, although there are reasons for taking it somewhat seriously, we have sufficient proof of Dakiki's fondness for music in the melody of his verse; and no better evidence of his devotion to ruby lips need be given than to cite the following lines in praise of one of his loves:

TO HIS BELOVED

Would in this world there were no night,
Then from her lips there were no flight!
No scorpion's sting were in my heart,
If that her tresses made no smart.²

Did 'neath her lip no star-dent dimple play,
The stars were not my comrades till the day.³
Were she not moulded from all good above,
My soul would not be moulded of her love;
And must I ever live sans my sweetheart,
Then God, I pray, let life from me depart!⁴

With a spirit like Dakiki's that courted maidens and minstrelsy, the joyous hour for wine, as the third of his delights, especially on a moonlight evening, could

¹ For a full text of this ode see Ethé, in *Morg. Forsch.* pp. 58-59; Pizzi, *Chr.* p. 58.

² In Persian poetry the dark curled ends of the beloved's locks are often likened, because of their shape, to the sting of a scorpion.

³ There is a subtle turn in the repetition here of the Persian word *kaukab*, 'star,' which is used first in a metaphorical sense as 'dimple in

the chin,' and secondly in the image of 'counting the stars,' a rhetorical expression for sleeplessness.

⁴ The rhyme in the original is *a b d f h j*; I have varied my meter from choice. For the text see Aufi, 2. 12; Ethé in *Morg. Forsch.* p. 60; Pizzi, *Chr.* p. 58; cf. also tr. Browne, 1. 461-462; Pickering, p. 684; Pizzi, *Storia*, 1. 129.

not pass by unheeded. His fondness for the juice of the grape, no doubt, made him more of a Zoroastrian than his heart, for that ancient faith allowed a temperate use of wine, which the stern mandates of the Kuran forbade.¹ Dakiki in any event seems to have freed his conscience from all qualms in such matters, if we may judge by one of his lyrics on wine, to which Ben Jonson would have nodded assent. Thus to his cup-bearer he gayly sings :

THE WINE CUP AND A MOONLIGHT EVENING

Ah, bring me the wine cup, fair Idol,
 For bright is the world, full of sheen,
 From up where the Moon now is shining,
 To yonder where Pisces is seen.
 When out from thy bower thou comest,
 Forth into this desert so drear,
 Wherever thy glance thou bestowest
 Doth soft as Byzance silk appear.
 Come, quaff we the wine cup together,
 And let us be merry and gay,
 For now is the time for wine-bibbing,
 The time of the glad holiday.²

Some sixteen or eighteen fragments of Dakiki's lyric poems have been preserved, numbering not much over a hundred lines in all; but these fragments show delicacy of feeling and genuine imagination.³ Yet there is one

¹ See above, pp. 29, 34, 39, 52 n. 1; and consult Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, *Wine amongst the Ancient Persians*, pp. 1-16, Bombay, 1888 (Gazette Steam Press).

² Text, Ethé, in *Morg. Forsch.* p. 61.

³ The fragments in Aufr, *Lubāb*, as noted by Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 1.

460-461, are, 10 with 27 couplets; 2.7 is 1 with 2 couplets; Ethé (additional), 3 with 13 couplets; and Shams ad-Din b. Kāis, *al-Mu'jam*, p. 255 gives 2 fragments with 5 couplets; cf. also id. p. 444. Add also two fragmentary stanzas in Asadi, *Lughat-i Furs*, fols. 59 r, 60, among some sixty single-line citations.

stanza, a quatrain in form, which, if really Dakiki's, is almost Marlowesque in its attitude towards resignation, and is well-nigh blasphemous, if alluding to God.¹ Darmesteter was somewhat fanciful in suggesting that the lines were gasped out by Dakiki amid his sufferings on that night when the assassin's fatal steel pierced his side.² But the quatrain in any case is worth quoting.

HAVE PATIENCE

'Patience,' they say, 'that He His patience show!'

Show, yes — but in another life, I trow.

This whole life I with patience have endured ;

It needs a next to show His patience, though.³

Dakiki's right to fame, however, as has already been intimated, rests upon the basis of his epic genius, the promise of which he showed in a remarkable degree. All too scanty as was the opportunity that was allowed him in the realm of heroic poetry, his name stands as a pioneer in this branch of composition. Persia was waiting for an epic poet, and to Dakiki, beyond any predecessor, belonged the all-absorbing idea of narrating in lofty verse the historic glories of ancient Iran.

He had taken up the theme with a verve, and had completed a thousand couplets — an episode relating to King Gushtasp, the patron of Zoroaster, and his holy war

¹ There is some uncertainty about the whole quatrain. It is ascribed to Dakiki only in Lutf Alibeg Adhur's *Ātash-kadah* (1760-79 A.D.), cf. Ethé in *Morg. Forsch.* p. 61, and his note ; yet see Pizzi, *Chr.* p. 58 (text), and tr. *Storia*, 1. 130 ; and cf. next note.

² Darmesteter, *Origines de la poésie persane*, p. 43.

³ Text, Ethé, p. 61 ; Pizzi, *Chr.* p. 58 ; tr. id. *Storia della poesia persiana*, 1.130 (after Ethé) ; and Pickering, *Nat. Rev.* 15. 685.

against Arjasp, the ruler of Turan — when the poniard in the hand of a Turkish minion (for whom it is thought he entertained an unlawful affection) brought a tragic end to his poetic work. The accounts of the fatal incident have sometimes intimated that the assassin's dirk was drawn against the bard because of a general hatred on account of his leanings toward the old Zoroastrian creed.

Dakiki's thousand couplets, however, have been rendered immortal, since Firdausi incorporated them bodily into his own great epic poem after having beheld, as he tells us, the dead poet in a dream. As these verses in the *Shah-namah* form the particular section that relates to Zoroaster and the development of the ancient religion of the Fire-worshippers — a delicate subject to handle in the midst of Muhammadan fanatics — there may have been as much prudence as loyalty on Firdausi's part in constructing this chapter in his epic out of the verses left by his ill-starred predecessor, instead of committing himself on the theme. In support, moreover, of Firdausi's claim in the assignment, it is agreed by scholars best competent to judge, that the verses thus accredited to Dakiki actually show a difference in style and diction from Firdausi's own manner of composition. What is more, they prove, by their strength and finish, that Dakiki himself was a master of the epic style, inherited, no doubt, from his predecessors, and especially from Rudagi.¹

¹ On this whole subject of the episode and Dakiki's style see Nöldeke, *Nationallepos*, in *Grundr.* 2. 148-150; Warner, *Shāhnāma*, 5. 20-22.

The trumpet call to the nation, sounded by Dakiki from halfway up the heights of epic song, was sharp and clear, if not far-reaching; but its blast was cut short before the full tone could be heard. The volume of a stronger trumpet blare was needed, the clarion note of a Firdausi on the topmost summit of the height, to impart to it that quality which makes it ring throughout the realm of time.

CHAPTER VII

THE ROUND TABLE OF MAHMUD OF GHAZNAH

COURT POETRY

(Early in the Eleventh Century A.D.)

‘And Peace to Mahmúd on his golden Throne.’

—FITZGERALD, *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, 11.

THE court of Firdausi's patron, Mahmud of Ghaznah, who ruled from 998 to 1030 A.D., included a Round Table of Poets — a *Dīvān*, ‘Assembly,’ it might have been called, although in Persian literary usage that word is applied rather to a collection of the poems of an author. Seats at the royal board or places in the assembly around the aureate throne were occupied only by bards who could claim their right to fame by infusing into their verse the spirit also of the great conqueror's time or by lavishing panegyrics upon their lord or on some court grandee. Even Firdausi in his great epic had to resort to a eulogy of Mahmud. Nevertheless, tinged though court poetry was with the fulsome flattery which prevailed in times when patrons, and not publishers, served to keep alive the Muses' song, there was heard often and again in the verse a personal note — that *vox humana* mingled with the *vox seraphica* — not drowned by the panegyric dominant. It is an echo of the minstrel's own soul, that finer

feeling which thrills with the universal chord and makes the verse true poetry.

Mahmud of Ghaznah, fosterer of poets and learned men though he was, was first and foremost a man of the sword.¹ His conquering blade brought under its sway a large portion of Persia proper, far outside of the ancestral domain of Ghaznah, the capital of a territory which now forms a part of Afghanistan. He launched, moreover, a dozen or seventeen successful raids against Northern and Western India to give proof of the edge of his trenchant steel.² Yet with it all he knew that there was no better way to hand down his name than through the works of the poets and men of letters and science whom he gathered to grace his court.

Mahmud, himself, on more than one occasion exchanged the pen for the sword. Six *ghazals*, or odes, are ascribed to his authorship.³ Among the poems attributed to him, in addition to a heroic vaunt in verse, given below, there exist three elegiac couplets that show a tenderer side of the conqueror's make-up. The half-dozen lines of this particular elegy give voice to a lament over the death of a young girl—*Gulistān*, 'Rose-garden,' she was called—and they bespeak real devotion on Mahmud's part. So, with the

Mahmud of
Ghaznah as a
Poet

¹ Cf. above, pp. 45-46.

² See Lane-Poole, *Mediaeval India*, pp. 14-33, New York and London, 1903; and id. in *History of India*, ed. Jackson, 3. 14-35, London, 1906; consult also V. A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, pp. 190-195, Oxford, 1919.

³ Cf. Ethé, in *Grundr.* 2. 224, 225 n. (where the question of authenticity is raised); Schefer, *Chrestomathie persane*, 2. 247-252 (Persian text), and pp. 242-246 (explanations).

sad strain of 'dust thou art, to dust returnest,' I repeat them here :

ON THE DEATH OF A YOUNG GIRL

Since thou, O Moon, beneath the dust dost rest,
Dust joins in union high with heaven's crest.
My heart laments ; I say, 'Heart, patient be,
This cometh by an All-just God's decree !'
Man is of dust, — and dust must aye remain ;
What's born of dust to dust returns again.¹

The heroic vaunt in verse, alluded to above, bears so much of the spirit of Mahmud, turning, as he does in the face of grim-visaged Death, to God, that I feel the lines to be genuinely Mahmud's (even though the authorship has been questioned).² Accordingly I venture to translate them, with all their boastfulness that gives place to deep religious humiliation :

THE KING — AND DEATH

Out of fear for my conquering sword and my mace that cleaves
strongholds amain,
The earth is subdued by my might, as the body subdued by the
brain.
Though in glory and power supreme, I am never contented to
rest,
So from land unto land have I roamed, in ambition's high con-
quering quest.
Oftentimes I gave place to my fancy that I was a somebody great,
In mine eyes have I now come to see king and pauper in equal
estate.
If perchance thou should'st dig from two graves two skulls of
the mouldering dead,

¹ Text, Aūfi (ed. Browne and Mīrzā Muḥammad Kazvīnī), 1. 26 ; cf. Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 2. 117.

² See also Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 2. 118, on Daulatshah's citation and ascription to Sanjar the Seljuk.

Who knows which was crown of the king, and which was the
 hireling's head?
 With one blow of my powerful fist I have thousands of
 strongholds laid low,
 With one stamp of my foot have I scattered multitudinous ranks
 of the foe.
 But when Death cometh now to assail me, naught availeth the
 way one has trod,
 'Tis the *Lord* that alone is abiding, and the King above Kings,
 it is *God*! ¹

Poetry must have resounded at Mahmud's court, for we are told by Daulatshah that 'four hundred appointed poets' (*chahār šad shā'ir muta'ayyin*) thronged his capital.² The names of a score of the more prominent are mentioned offhand by the Persian writer Aruzi, who wrote in the twelfth century, and many others are known.³ Some of these minstrels, like Minuchihri, may come in for consideration in a later volume. But chief amidst the galaxy, till the greater light of Firdausi came to outshine them all, were Unsuri and Farrukhi, while Asjadi also may be mentioned. The fact that these very three should have recognized Firdausi's superior genius when he arrived at Mahmud's palace, as related in the next chapter, speaks alike for their own merits as judges of real poetry and for their generosity as members of the fellowcraft of song.

Unsuri, the first of the trio that have been named, was a native of Balkh, and held rank at Mahmud's court

¹ For the text here translated see Daulatshah, p. 67; but consult especially the preceding note. Original rhyme *a b d f*, etc.

² See Daulatshah, *Tadhkirat*, pp. 44-45.

³ See Nizami-i Aruzi, *Chahār Maqāla* (ed. Mīrzā Muḥammad Kaẓvīnī) p. 28; cf. tr. Browne, in *JRAS.* 1899, p. 658 (= reprint, p. 46).

not only as a royal panegyrist but as poet laureate. 'King of Poets' was his title, and to Unsuri belonged,

Unsuri, by court appointment, the prerogative of hav-
 d. 1040 or ing to pass first on every poetic composition
 1050 A. D. that was presented, before it could reach the
 sovereign's ear.¹ His accepted appellation was 'Master'
 Unsuri, and the other bards acknowledged themselves
 his disciples. Although, in a way, he was a natural rival
 of Firdausi, he proved himself a friend, and won from the
 great epic poet an encomium.² Admiration was shown
 Unsuri likewise by others of his fellow-poets. Minuchihri
 (who died in 1041 A.D.) says that 'the perfume of his
 verses was as sweet as the fragrance of the jasmine'
 (*hamī būy-i saman*);³ while Aruzi, more than a century
 later, adds a tribute in verse to the lasting quality of his
 poetry.⁴ His personality must have been attractive, since
 'he combined the rank of a favorite courtier with that
 of poet' (*manṣab-i nadīmī bā shā'irī*).⁵ Yet after all,
 little more is known regarding Unsuri's life, except that
 he died in 1040 or 1050 A.D.⁶

With regard to Unsuri's personality, moreover, and the
 Unsuri's influence which he exerted over his sovereign
 Gift of lord, we have an anecdote related by the
 Improvisation above-mentioned Aruzi, which is worth repeat-
 ing.⁷ It happened that one night, when Mahmud was

¹ Daulatshah, pp. 44-45, cf. Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 2. 120-121.

² Daulatshah, p. 45.

³ Daulatshah, p. 42, l. 20.

⁴ Aruzi, *op. cit.* p. 28; cf. tr. Browne, *JRAS.* 1899, p. 660 (= reprint, p. 48).

⁵ Daulatshah, p. 44.

⁶ Cf. Ethé, in *Grundr.* 2. 224.

⁷ Aruzi, *Chahār Maḳāla*, pp. 34-26; cf. tr. Browne, *JRAS.* 1899, pp. 762-764 (= reprint, pp. 56-58); cf. also Pizzi, *Storia*, 1. 142, n. 5.

well drenched with wine, he grasped a knife and was about to shear off the luxuriant tresses of hair which graced the temples of Ayaz, his favorite minion at court. He refrained, however, for the instant, but handed the blade to Ayaz, who dutifully cut off the curls from his own head and laid them before Mahmud. On coming to himself next morning—in the 'False Dawn' it may have been—the monarch was filled with despair at the act which he had caused; and the court was plunged into equal despondency. A poet's skill alone could save the day. Unsuri was ready with an improvised quatrain at once.

THE SHORN CURLS

Though wrong, if that thy Idol's tress be shorn,
 What cause to rise and sit in grief forlorn?
 'Tis time for mirth and glee—to call for wine!
 Trimming the cypress' locks serves but t' adorn.¹

The poet's impromptu was a flash of genius; the royal horizon was cleared, the court's equanimity restored. Mahmud was so well pleased with the quatrain, as the story concludes, that he ordered Unsuri's lap to be filled three times over with gold and silver. He then called for wine and for music, to the accompaniment of which the verses were repeated in song. All was serene!

Unsuri's literary activity must have been great, for we have the authority of Daulatshah to the effect that as poet laureate 'he was continually composing poems on the deeds and battles of the King, and there is a lengthy panegyric of Unsuri's, about one hundred and eighty

¹ Text, Aruzi, *op. cit.* p. 35. The original quatrain has a double rhyme: *kāstan ast—khāstan ast—khvāstan ast—pīrāstan ast.*

couplets, in which he recorded in encomium-verse all of the King's battles, wars, and conquests.' ¹ A *Dīvān*, or collection of Unsuri's poems, has in fact been preserved.²

Mention may be made of a rather long eulogy on Mahmud's brother, Prince Nasr, which is an example of the 'question and answer' style (*su'āl u javāb*), the lines alternating throughout with an interrogation and a response. The first dozen or sixteen verses read like a rhapsody of love between a wooer and his beloved, then leading up to the burden of the song, which is a panegyric of the prince.³ Among the poetic works of Unsuri there is likewise one, the loss of which is particularly to be regretted; it is a romantic epopee, *Vāmik* and *'Adhrā*, on a subject as old as Sasanian times; but only some stray fragments of it have been preserved through chance quotations.⁴

Ethé's estimate of Unsuri's literary merits is not so high as was that of his own contemporaries, and he finds that Unsuri falls short of Rudagi, whom he sought to rival.⁵ But there is one little poem which I should like

¹ Daulatshah, p. 45. Two of Unsuri's long panegyrics on Mahmud will be found translated into prose in Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, 4. 515-518, London, 1872; also a quatrain in praise of the same monarch, *op. cit.* 4. 189; cf. likewise Pizzi, *Storia*, 1. 142-145.

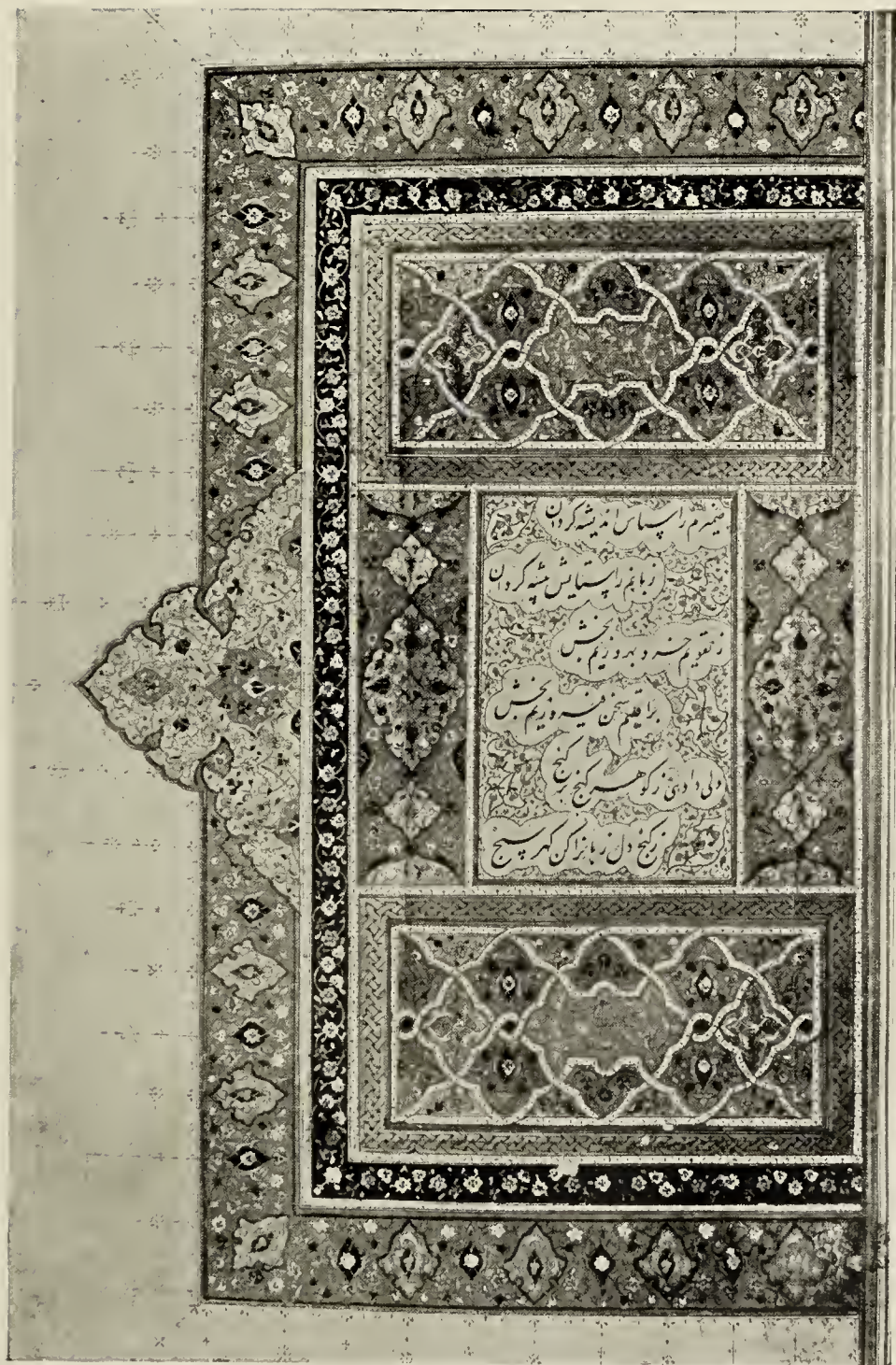
² See Ethé, in *Grundr.* 2. 224, 225 n., on a lithographed edition of Unsuri, which appeared in Teheran, A.H. 1298 (= 1881 A.D.). Note might be made also of the fact that Unsuri is cited over a hundred times in Asadi's

Lughat-i Furs (cf. ed. Horn, pp. 24-25), six or seven couplet-stanzas being among the citations (cf. fols. 20, 21 r, 27 r, 40, 57, 58 r, 62 r).

³ For text see Daulatshah, pp. 45-46; and for a translation of the panegyric, Browne, 2. 121-123.

⁴ Cf. Ethé, in *Grundr.* 2. 239-240; Horn, *Gesch. Pers. Litt.* pp. 80, 177; and id. ed. Asadi's *Lughat-i Furs*, p. 25; Browne, 2. 275-276; cf. also Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, 4. 189.

⁵ Ethé, in *Grundr.* 2. 224.



EMBELLISHED INTRODUCTORY PAGE OF A PERSIAN MANUSCRIPT
 (From the Cochran Collection of Persian Manuscripts in the Metropolitan
 Museum of Art, New York)

to quote, because of its strain — a minor chord seemingly never absent from the music of these earlier Persian bards — the note perhaps of an Unsuri grown older, writing in a mood of true poetic despondency. Hamlet soliloquizing over Yorick's skull would have sympathized.

IN A REFLECTIVE MOOD

Alas, that from this bright world we must go,
 Beneath a pit of clay, turned all to dust!
 Body uncleansed from earthly sin to show
 Before a God, All-pure, Perfect, and Just!
 That a mind, like fire's flash or water's flow,
 Should with the dust and wind find measure just!¹

The second above-mentioned among the chief minstrel group at Mahmud's court, and associated with Firdausi, was Farrukhi. Though ranking below Unsuri in position at the court circle, he is regarded by modern judges as his superior in literary merit. Farrukhi was a native of Sistan, the province which still forms a part of the border between Persia and Southwestern Afghanistan. Tradition has it that his personal appearance was most unprepossessing and his dress uncouth — we can still see in fancy his heavy turban as a 'Sagzi,' or native of Sistan, — but we are told that his native talents, his cleverness in poetic composition, especially in improvisation, and his skill in playing the lute (*chang*), were such that early in life he obtained a position at the baronial hall of one of the great

Farrukhi,
 d. 1037 or
 1038 A.D.

¹Text, Mustaufi-i Kāzvinī, *Ta'rikh-i* tr. Browne, in *JRAS.* 1900, p. 761
Guzīdah, ed. Browne (*Gibb Mem.* (= reprint, p. 41). Rhyme in the
Series, 14. 1), p. 823, London, 1910; original, *b d f*.

landed proprietors of his native place, who gave him a yearly emolument. This salary was increased by the lord of the manor when Farrukhi married, but it still proved insufficient, as the story goes.¹ So Farrukhi joined a caravan that was starting from Sistan, taking with him few if any effects, but furnished (as he himself says in a verse)

‘With material spun in my brain
And woven in my soul,’

and journeyed to the princely domain of one of Mahmud’s vassals, Amir Abu ’l-Muzaffar, lord of a district in Transoxiana, whose reputation for munificence to poets was far-famed.

The vassal Amir, who happened to be a lover of horses as well as an appreciative listener to minstrelsy, chanced to be away from his princely residence, being engaged at the branding-ground, where ‘18,000’ of his mares and colts were being branded that spring. By a happy circumstance, however, a certain steward in high position at the palace, to whom Farrukhi applied, was a man of talents and could himself indite verses. He at once recognized Farrukhi’s merits in the encomium-poem which the minstrel brought with him, as composed for presentation to the Amir; and after telling him that the prince was engaged in the round-up of colts, which were being lassoed for branding, suggested that a special poem suitable for the occasion should be prepared.

¹ The whole account of Farrukhi will be found in Nizami-i Aruzi’s *Chahār Maqāla* (ed. Mirzā Muḥammad, in *Gibb Mem. Series*, 11. 36-40); tr. Browne, in *JRAS.* 1899, pp. 764-772 (= reprint, pp. 58-66).

It is probably unparalleled in the history of poetry that the subject of branding steeds should be used as a poetic theme ; but Pegasus was there, as the sequel proved. Overnight, Farrukhi improvised the verses which I translate below, and the friendly steward was amazed next morning upon hearing them. The vivid description of the springtide, the graphic scene of the plain, dotted with tents in which at evening convivial intercourse was held, the lively picture of the scampering colts trying to escape the Amir's lasso, and the lurid flare of the branding fires which blazed throughout the night, all revealed Farrukhi's genius for portraying a situation.

Forthwith mounting the poet on a steed, the steward rode out with him to the branding-ground and conducted him that same evening into the princely presence.

When the wine had gone round, Farrukhi rose and modestly recited at first the brief panegyric on the Amir which he had previously prepared, and which began with the couplet describing how he had come from Sistan by caravan to his court. The Amir, who was also something of a poet, showed pleasure ; but the steward added, 'Wait and see.' The flagons were filled again, and Farrukhi, to the accompaniment of the lute, whose strings he knew so well to tune, and amid rapt attention, broke forth in song with his newly improvised poem on 'the Branding-ground' — full of graphic color :

THE BRANDING-GROUND

Whilst the meadow hides its visage in a veil of emerald green,
And the hill-tops wrap their foreheads in a fold of seven-hued sheen,

The fragrant earth, like musk-deer, an aroma boundless bears,
And the willow, like the parrot's plume, a countless foliage wears.

It was yestern — yester-midnight — that the zephyr's breeze did
bring

A vernal scent i' the northern blast. Hail to thee, breath of Spring!
Stored in its sleeve, the wind, it seems, fine powdered musk enfolds,
Whilst the garden, in its bosom, shining buds like puppets holds.

The narcissus a bright necklace, set with shining gems, has on,
And the red syringa wears in its ear rubies from Badakhshān.

Yes, the branches of the rose-bush, too, have donned a wine-hued
gown,

And five-fingered leaves, like human hands, from the sycamore hang
down ;

While the garden's changing boughs and sprays match the cha-
meleon's hue,

And the pool from pearl its lustre takes, as the clouds drop pearls
of dew.

Robes of honor, you might fancy, all had won by special grace,
So full of color the garden-mead of the Royal Branding-place ;
And the Royal Ground for Branding is so joyous and elate
That our age stands now bewildered by its brilliancy's estate.

And amidst the verdure's green on green, like stars within the sky,
Tent after tent, like fort on fort, you everywhere descry.

The greensward echoes constant to the lute of minstrels fine,

And brave 'Wassails' in the tents resound, as the pages pour the
wine.

In every tent is a lover, close wrapt in his sweetheart's arms,

On every grassplot is a friend, to enjoy true friendship's charms.

There are kisses, love's embraces, though coy damsels frown the while,
Or the song and dance of minstrels to deep sleep the maids beguile.

At the door of the pavilion tent of Prince 'All-fortunate'

A branding-fire is blazing like the sun, without abate ;

Its gleaming flames like lances dart, all girt with gold brocade,

Hotter than a young man's passion, yellower than gold assayed.

Like branching corals the branding-irons take on a ruby glow,

And the prong of each, 'midst the fiery heat, a pomegranate's grain
doth show.

Slaves that ne'er know need of sleeping, rank on rank all ready
stand,

Whilst the unmarked colts, aligned in rows, await the glowing
brand.

On his gallant steed, 'Stream-forder,' meanwhile rides the Prince
afar

Across the plain, lasso in hand, like young Isfandiar.

See, how the lariat curleth, as the locks of some loved youth!

Yet its hold is firm, like to the bonds between old friends, in sooth —

This Just King, Bu'l-Muzaffar, is attended by his band,

He, the Prince and Lion-hunter, that holds cities in his hand.

In his puissant grasp the lasso coils like to a serpent's fold,

E'en as the rod turned to a snake in Moses' hand of old.

What steed soe'er by the noose's loop is caught in its circling swing
On the forehead, flank, and shoulder bears the brand-mark of the
King.

Yet, whilst giving brands on one side, he grants likewise rich
bequests,

His poets dowering with bridles, with caparisons his guests.¹

The Amir was delighted with the poem. His wit was quick, as the outcome shows, to catch the point in the closing verse regarding a bridled and caparisoned steed as a reward for a poet who came as a guest to the branding-ground.² His admiration was no doubt shared by the courtier-throng with plaudits, or with a 'bravo' (*aḥsant*) and a 'wassail' (*nūsh*) as the goblets were replenished once more, while the Amir, not lacking in a sense of humor, called Farrukhi 'a cunning rascal,' and then bade him go out and catch for his own as many of the round-up colts as he could.

¹ Text, Daulatshah, pp. 55-57; Aruzi, ed. Mīrzā Muḥammad, in *Gibb Mem.* 11. 37-39; tr. Browne, in *JRAS.* 1899, pp. 767-769 (=reprint, pp. 61-63).

² It seems certain that the veiled allusion, in the closing lines, to *lagām*, 'bridles,' and *fasār*, 'caparisons' (lit. 'headstalls'), is so to be interpreted.

Inspired by such a noteworthy mark of princely favor, and fired by the taste of the court wine, Farrukhi dashed forth, as the narrative continues, unwinding and waving his long turban in order to catch some of the horses, yet, for a considerable time, all in vain, wine-befogged as his brain was. But at last he succeeded in driving forty-two of the unbroken colts into the enclosure of a ruined caravanserai, where they sought refuge from the chase; and then he lay down to sleep off the effects of his exertion and his over-copious drafts.

Next morning — the account goes on — the Amir, after having heard the story, summoned Farrukhi into his presence, gave him, besides the wild colts, a charger of state with bridle and caparison, and bestowed upon him a lordly tent, camels, slaves, Persian carpets, and a robe of honor to boot.

Farrukhi prospered in the Amir's service, and from there fortune soon led him to his longed-for goal, the royal palace of Mahmud at Ghaznah, where he was treated with so high favor that 'twenty servants, belted with silver girdles, rode in his train.'¹ Later in his career he seems, like so many others, to have fallen out of Mahmud's good graces, and was banished from the court, though he survived that monarch and died in the year 1037 or 1038 A.D.²

¹ So Aruzi, *Chahār Makāla*, referred to above; cf. also Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 2. 128.

² Cf. Ethé, in *Grundr.* 2. 224. The historian Khvandamir says that Farrukhi amassed great wealth at Mah-

mud's court but was robbed of it on his way to Samarkand, a misfortune which he lamented in verse, translated in Elliot and Dowson, *Hist. of India*, 4. 189-190; cf. also Pizzi, *Storia*, 1. 140.

The poetical works of Farrukhi were collected into a *Divān*,¹ still extant, and his verses show, beside the panegyric vein, a genuine power of description and a fine lyrical sense; but his fame as a poet would not perhaps have lived if it had not been for his association with Firdausi.

The third of the trio, named in the same connection with the coterie of four hundred court-bards, was Asjadi. Possibly his name would likewise not have **Asjadi** survived if he had not shared with Unsuri (fl. 1025 A.D.) and Farrukhi in putting the famous rhyming-test to Firdausi when the latter was seeking admission to Mahmud's court, as told in the next chapter (pp. 87-89).

Too little, alas, has been preserved from Asjadi's pen; and regarding his life it is open to question whether he was a native of Herat, Bukhara, or of Merv, though probably the latter.² It may be also a matter of debate whether he really was a pupil of Unsuri.³ All the court poets called themselves disciples of that Laureate.⁴ A *Divān* of Asjadi was not current even in Daulatshah's time, the fifteenth century, although verses by him were quoted in poetic collections.⁵ In style he seems rather

¹ See Daulatshah, p. 57, l. 13; and cf. Ethé, in *Grundr.* 2. 225 n.; Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 2. 124. Observe that Farrukhi is cited some ninety times in Asadi's *Lughat-i Furs* (ed. Horn), cf. esp. fols. 17 r, 48 r, 54, for brief stanzas; there are also two stanzas cited by Shams ibn Kais, *al-Mu'jam* (in *Gibb Mem.* 10), pp. 95, 325; cf. likewise citations, pp. 197, 339, 438.

² Daulatshah, p. 17, says Bukhara;

Aufi, 2. 50, says Merv. Cf. furthermore Ethé, in *Grundr.* 2. 224; Browne, 2. 123. Asjadi's death occurred about 1040 A.D. (= A.H. 432), according to Horn, Asadi's *Lughat-i Furs*, p. 24.

³ Daulatshah, p. 47.

⁴ Cf. Daulatshah, p. 44, l. 23.

⁵ Cf. Daulatshah, p. 47. Also for some of his fragments see Aufi, 2. 50-53, and note that Asjadi is quoted more than fifty times in Asadi's

to have indulged in artificial devices and rhetorical effects. It was regarded in Persian poetry, for example, as a beauty and not as a defect to repeat the same word or radical two or three times. Asjadi does this in four verses which are not easy to render :

THE WEeping LOVER

Tear-drops, a-dripping, from my eyes I shed,
Like the cloud, or like the murmuring, murmuring stream ;
These drops the dripping rain have far outsped,
These murmurs like my sad heart's murmurings seem.¹

In a somewhat fanciful manner he says that, for weal or woe, he has become a Zoroastrian, because his heart burns with love like the flame of a fire-temple, and his bloodshot eyes stream like a wine press — the Magians, it may be noted, had no scruples about making or drinking wine.²

Among the stray bits of Asjadi's song, however, may be cited in this connection a quatrain which tells the tale of Asjadi's having looked upon the wine cup when it was red, but as having repented :

ASJADI THE PENITENT

Of wine and praise of wine I do repent,
Of lovely maids, fair chins with silver blent.
Lip-penitence ! Heart lusting still for sin !
O God, such penitence thou dost resent !³

Lughat-i Furs (cf. ed. Horn, p. 24), among them a couple of stanzas in quatrain form (cf. fols. 8 r, 33).

¹ For text see Shams ad-Din Muḥammad ibn Kais ar-Razi, *al-Mu'jam fī Ma'āyiri Ash'āri 'l-'Ajam* (ed. Mīrzā Muḥammad, in *Gibb Mem. Series* 10), p. 315, London, 1909. Observe in

the original the repetition (five times each) of *ḡaṭrah*, 'drop,' and *khīrah*, 'idle murmuring' ; and consult also Horn, *Gesch. Pers. Litt.*, p. 64.

² Cf. Horn, *op. cit.* p. 80 ; and see above, pp. 34, 39, 52 n. 1, 62.

³ Text, Daulatshah, p. 47 ; cf. also Browne, 2. 123.

As this quatrain was recited by Asjadi, there may have been sighs and there may have been whispers among the throng of courtiers; yet when a madrigal fell from his lips, there must have been salvos. No tone heroic, however, was in Asjadi's voice; and the king, grandees, courtiers, and pages alike, stood listening till a Firdausi should arise and sing in strains of rhapsody an epic for all time.

CHAPTER VIII

FIRDAUSI, AND THE GREAT PERSIAN EPIC

(About 935-1025 A.D.)

‘Shapes of epic grandeur are stationed around me.’

— KEATS, *Letters*.

THE trumpet’s blare resounds, the din of battle fills the air, and the verse rings with the valorous deeds of Persia’s heroes and the proud triumphs of long lines of ancient kings. Epic poetry has come into being through the clarion voice of Firdausi to give expression to the inherited pride of the nation in her glory before the Arab Conquest. If it is epic poetry that recalls to the memory of a folk the greatness of its pristine fame, the Shah-namah does this for Persia as its epic poem paramount, and Firdausi’s masterpiece enters at the same moment into the list of the great heroic poems of the world.

As already noted, the Arab Conquest of Persia, like the Norman Conquest of England, may have weakened the national feeling, but it did not destroy it.¹ The battle of Nahavand meant to Iran, in the realm of letters, much the same thing as the battle of Hastings meant to Britain. In each case there was born a poet-genius of

¹ See above, pp. 12-15.

world-wide fame three centuries after the clash of arms had ceased, though it must be emphasized that Firdausi's epic talents lay in a realm quite different from Chaucer's story-telling gifts.

A closer parallel in the domain of epic composition, and yet one vastly to the advantage of the Persian rhapsodist, might easily be drawn between Firdausi's *Shah-namah* and the rhymed chronicle of Layamon's *Brut*, which recorded in measured verse the History of the Early Kings of Britain. In both instances the poet-annalist harked back to themes in a national past otherwise long forgotten; both bards alike, though separated from each other in the realm of space and time, made use of material handed down from ancient days; and in each case there was something of the soul of the poet commingled with the spirit of the historian and chronicler. The comparison, however, between the sixteen thousand double verses of the *Brut*, uncouth in form, and the sixty thousand couplets of the *Shah-namah*, polished to the finest finish, might easily be overdrawn; nevertheless there would still be room to add that if the British bard was chary in using words from the vocabulary of the Norman-French conquerors, the Persian rhapsodist was equally careful in avoiding, as far as possible, linguistic borrowings from the speech of the Arab victors. Firdausi might justly be called 'a well of Persian undefiled.'¹

A Distant
Parallel
in English

¹ Yet on this entire question of employing Arabic words compare in *Grundr.* 2. 149 n. 4, p. 150; and Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 2. 145-146. Nöldeke, *Das iranische Nationalepos*,

As has been seen already, this Homer of Iran represents the cresting of the national wave of patriotism.

Dakiki He was the successor of the gifted Dakiki,
as Forerunner that youthful herald whose tragic death came at the very moment when he was about to proclaim the first fruits of the epic victory in whose triumph he himself was not to share.

The nation had been waiting for an epic bard ; the time was ripe, the path was clear. Firdausi seized the chance.

Inspiration Born at Tus, in Northeastern Persia, about
for Firdausi 935 A.D. (possibly five years earlier) of old Iranian stock and a member of the *Dihk̄ān* class of landed proprietors in Khurasan, whom the Arab Conquest had not effectually displaced, and in whose families were preserved the oldtime legends and historic traditions of Iran, Firdausi possessed an inherited aptitude for the theme. His poetic talents and his enthusiastic zeal for the task qualified him alike.

Antiquarian materials, moreover, were available in sufficient measure for the genius that could recognize

their national worth. Chronicle-histories of
Persian
Sources for Media and Persia had been kept from the
the Epic earliest times, if we may judge from statements in the Greek writers Herodotus, Ktesias, and Agathias, the Armenian Moses of Khorene, and from the biblical authority of the Book of Esther.¹ It seems clear that these annals were continued down to the time of the

¹ Cf. Herodotus, 1. 1-5, 95, 214 ; 2. 27 ; 4. 30 ; Moses of Khorene, 2. Ktesias, Frag. p. 98 (ed. Gilmore) ; 67 ; and Esther, 6. 1 ; 10. 2 ; see also Diodorus Siculus, 2. 22. 5 ; Agathias, Xenophon, *Cyrop.* 1. 2. 1.

later Sasanian monarchs and must have been accessible to any court antiquarian. Tradition makes it certain that a collection from this storehouse, to which the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is only a remote parallel, was made in the form of a prose-epic, the *Khvatāi-nāmak*, or 'Book of Sovereigns,' somewhere about 640 A.D. under Yazdagard III, the last of the Sasanian Kings. This epic thesaurus was gathered together by one Danishvar, a member of the *dihkān* class of landed gentry, who was interested in the past records of his country. Traces of the work have been preserved, and it must have been known in the tenth century, Dakiki's time, and surely served Firdausi, however directly or indirectly, as a source for his famous Shah-namah.

Dakiki's death and Firdausi's own ambition were the sparks that kindled the epic fire in the Bard of Tus. We can imagine the quickened pulse-beat with which Firdausi saw in a dream 'that youth, Dakiki, of fair speech and of brilliant mind,' as he calls him, when his dead predecessor appeared in a vision and gave him the inspiration that led him to seek for a copy of that ancient chronicle-book. Firdausi's own words best tell the tale of what the poet's shade, in its spectral apparition, meant to him, so I versify them here somewhat freely :

Firdausi's
Dream of
Dakiki

My heart was fired, as from his sight it turned
Towards the world's Sovereign Throne, and inly yearned,
'May I lay hand upon that book some day
And tell, in my own words, that ancient lay!'

Countless the persons whom I sought for aid,
 As I of fleeting time was sore afraid
 Lest I in turn not long enough should live,
 But to another's hand the task must give.
 Nay more — lest that my means should ne'er suffice, —
 For such a work there was no buyer's price;
 The age forsooth was filled with wars of greed,
 A straitened world it was for those in need.

Some time in that condition did I live,
 Yet of my secret not a word did give,
 Finding no person who my aims would share,
 Nor act for me with friendly patron care. . . .

By hap, a friend beloved at Tus I had ;
 Thou would'st have said ' Two souls in one skin clad ! '
 To me he spake, ' Good is thy whole project,
 Thy foot toward fortune now is turned direct ;
 That book, which written is in Pahlavi,
 I'll get for thee ; but slack thou must not be ;
 Thine is the gift of speech, and youth is thine
 To tell the tale of champions' deeds — in fine,
 Do thou the Kingly Book anew relate
 And seek through it renown among the great.'

When he at last that book before me laid
 He made ablaze with light my soul of shade !¹

Without doubt, Firdausi had actually made long and conscientious preparation for his special task of rehabilitating the national epos of his people, equipping himself by researches into the Pahlavi, or Middle Persian, sources from which he could draw material for his long chronicle-poem. That he had a scholarly

¹ Cf. Vullers, 1. 9 ; Pizzi, 1. 112 ; Vullers-Landauer, 3. 1495 ; cf. tr. Mohl, Mohl, 1. 12 ; Warner, 1. 109. In the 4. 287 ; Warner, 5. 30-31 ; Pizzi, 5. same connection see furthermore 76-77.

acquaintance with Arabic, despite his natural avoidance of that idiom in a Persian epic, is shown by his accurate employment of occasional Arabic words when they could not absolutely be avoided. Regarding his masterly control of Persian as a poet, no comment need be made; and the dignity of his style throughout is harmonious with his heroic theme.

From incidental allusions in the *Shah-namah* itself we may infer that Firdausi was approximately forty years old (about the year 974 A.D.) when he made the real beginning of his monumental work. From Earlier
Career other personal references in the poem we know that he was married and that he had had two children—the one a son, whose death he mourned in touching strains; the other a daughter, who survived him. For nearly twenty-five years Firdausi appears to have labored at his home in Tus upon the cherished theme of his life. His growing fame was doubtless then the cause of his seeking preferment at the court of Mahmud of Ghaznah, where he found a sovereign-patron that shed munificent favor so great at the outset as to win from the poet a fervid eulogy of praise only to be later revoked. The poem in its final form still commemorates the glory of Mahmud's name, but the scathing satire from the pen of the bard, disabused of his hopes, as mentioned below, remains a lasting stigma on the ruler's fame.¹

Tradition narrates—and the story is old and probably true in its general setting—that Firdausi first approached

¹ See Jackson, *From Constantinople to the Home of Omar Khayyam*, p. 281.

Mahmud's Round Table of court poets at a moment when they were engaged in poetic composition. The same tradition gives the names of the three chief
 Introduction at Mahmud's Court minstrels as Unsuri, Asjadi, and Farrukhi.

It may have been natural for them not to wish to admit an outsider into their favored circle. At all events, the anecdote recounts that, to put to shame their unwelcome intruder, they bade him stand the test of matching one of the hardest rhymes in Persian poetry. The words were *rūshan*, 'bright,' *gulshan*, 'rose-garden,' and *jūshan*, 'cuirass' — rhymes as hard to mate as *window*, *twelfth*, *month*, and *silver* in English. Firdausi, they thought, would not be able to complete the fourth line with any rhyme at all. So Unsuri, in praise of the loveliness of a fair maiden, began :

'Thy visage the light of the moon doth surpass.'

Farrukhi matched this with —

'No rose in the garth hath thy cheek's bloom, sweet lass.'

Asjadi continued by another puzzling catchword,

'Thine eyelashes pierce like a lance through cuirass.'

Firdausi instantly caught up the rhyme —

'As Giv's spear in combat did Pushan harass.'¹

The readiness of the response and the interesting historical allusion to Giv, which was unknown to the coterie, together with Firdausi's quickness as he proceeded in perfect verse to tell the story of the eventful battle between the two heroes, Pushan and Giv, whom he had thus men-

¹ For references in detail see Jackson, *From Constantinople*, pp. 281-282, n. 2.

tioned, immediately won applause and generous admiration from the three. Charmed by Firdausi's poetic grace, and impressed by his personality, gifts, and learning, Unsuri, Farrukhi, and Asjadi recognized him unhesitatingly as their compeer, or as their superior, and proceeded to advance him in every way in favor with the Sultan.

If the story be true, such an example of disinterestedness would not be easy to parallel in the East nor could it be readily matched in the West. Unfortunately this story, although written in very choice Persian, is now often regarded as mere fiction. Nevertheless (and this detail should be emphasized) it conveys some idea of the general estimation in which Firdausi's genius was held at least by tradition.¹ Among other current tales, moreover, is one that Mahmud had praised the newly-arrived bard from Tus by saying that he had, through his verses, turned the Court into a 'Paradise' (*Firdaus*), whence Firdausi assumed this appellation as his poetic name; but other explanations are possible.²

It is well known that this poet, more than worthy of a laureate title, lived long in the sunshine of Mahmud's court, who promised him a thousand gold pieces for each thousand lines of his epic composition. Sultan Mahmud's liberality called forth from Firdausi the splendid panegyric, already mentioned,

The Years at
Court

¹ See my article on Firdausi in Warner, *The World's Best Literature*, 10. 5735-5739, New York, 1917, and also *From Constantinople*, pp. 281-282. From both of these works I have repeated in part some paragraphs or

ideas in the present chapter.

² See Khvandamir, tr. Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, 4. 191; and cf. Browne, *Lit. Hist.* 2. 138, n. 3, 139; in which connection see footnote in my *From Constantinople*, p. 284, n. 2.

that was only to be eclipsed, years later, by the savageness and scathing satire, which the poet in old age poured out against his niggard patron when disappointed of the promised reward that was to crown his work.

Tradition recounts that Firdausi was a septuagenarian when the last line of the 60,000 couplets that make up the Shah-namah was completed, and the royal reward for his life's labor became due. But jealousy and intrigue against him had not been idle during his long residence at court. Instead of the promised gold, Mahmud was induced to send him 60,000 dirhams in silver. Firdausi is said to have been in the bath when the elephant laden with the money-bags arrived. On discovering the deception the injured poet rejected the gift with scorn, divided the silver into three portions, presenting one of them to the bath-steward, another to the elephant-driver, while he bestowed the last upon an attendant who brought him a glass of cordial. He then gave vent to the venom of his spleen in the famous satire, which is as immortal as the epic itself, holding Mahmud's slave-born origin up to eternal scorn. The angry monarch ordered that the poet should be crushed to death beneath the foot of an elephant, but Firdausi managed to save his life by fleeing from the city, only to become an exile in poverty and dire distress.

For ten years the aged singer was a wanderer, though he ultimately found, in Tabaristan, a princely patron,



THE BRIDGE OVER THE KASHAF RIVER AT TUS
(From a photograph by the author)



RUINED WALLS OF TUS AT THE SITE OF THE FORMER RUDBAR
GATE

(From a photograph by the author)

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who sought to reconcile him with the unappreciative lord of Ghaznah. Owing to this prince's favor, it is said, he was induced to expunge the biting lines written in derision of Mahmud, though they still live on as a stigma in many manuscripts of the Shah-namah to tarnish the fame of that despotic, though great, ruler. To his new benefactor at the Tabaristan court, Firdausi dedicated the long romantic poem, composed in his old age, on 'Yusuf and Zulaikha,' or the love of Potiphar's wife for Joseph — an acknowledged masterpiece in the realm of versified romance.

**Firdausi in
Exile**

In the bard's last days, for he was now advanced to his ninetieth year, the longing seems to have come upon him to return to his old home at Tus, and there he died of a broken heart, it is said, on hearing a child in the market-place repeating verses from his terrible satire.

**The Bard's
Last Days**

An old-time tradition relates that Mahmud had meanwhile relented of his anger, and had despatched to the city of Tus a magnificent caravan, bearing to the aged poet gifts fully equivalent to the gold pieces of which he had been disappointed, and bestowing upon him a robe of honor worthy of his fame. But all too late. The treasure-laden camel train, having crossed the Kashaf River at Tus, entered the city gate just as the funeral procession was conducting the dead poet's body to the grave. The date of his death was about the year 1025 A.D., or, according to another reckoning, the year 1020 A.D.; and his body was interred

**Mahmud
Relents**

at Tus, though the precise spot which was his burial place can no longer be identified.¹

His Lasting Though nearly a thousand years have passed
Fame since Firdausi's death, his name still lives
 and his fame will last. Firdausi himself, even in the *de profundis* moments of darkest despondency, rises to the heights of exultation in a personal passage in the great epic when he exclaims in a vaunt, proud as the boast of Horace,

From poesy I've raised a tower high,
 Which neither wind nor rain can ever harm ;
 Over this work the years shall come and go,
 And he that wisdom hath shall learn its charm ;

and again, with assurance of undying renown, he closes the famous poem with the verse :

I shall live on ; the seeds of words have I
 Sown broadcast, and I shall not wholly die.²

¹ See Jackson, *From Constantinople to the Home of Omar Khayyam*, pp. 284-285, 290-292.

² See Jackson, *From Constantinople*, p. 293.

CHAPTER IX

THE SHAH-NAMAH

SOME SELECTIONS TRANSLATED

‘As full of valour as of royal blood.’

— SHAKESPEARE, *Richard the Second*, 5. 5. 112.

THE story of the Shah-namah may be described in briefest terms as the chronicle history of Iran from the age of the mythical ruler Kaiumars, or Gayumart, whom tradition places about 3600 B.C., down to the death of the last Sasanian king, the historic Yazdagard III, in 651 A.D., and the events accompanying the fall of the empire through the Arab Conquest.

The Story
of the
Shah-namah

The argument, if we so may term it, of the epic begins with a poetic picture of the rise of the Iranian empire in legendary antiquity, followed by the golden age during the reign of King Jamshid, succeeded by a thousand cruel years of foreign rule under Zahak, typifying the sway of Babylon for centuries over Iran, till that usurping yoke of Semitic tyranny could at last be thrown off by the renowned Faridun of fabled fame. Wars between Turan and Iran next fill the scene as the result of civil strife and bloody fratricide until, in Minuchihr's reign, the poem tells, in a long romantic episode, how the love of the valiant Zāl for the fair Rudabah gave birth to

Rustam, the great hero of the epic. Rustam's martial exploits, herculean labors, and signal triumphs (one of them being, alas, the tragic slaying in single combat of Suhrab, his own son, whom he did not recognize) occupy a large part of the poem.

The majesty of the Kaianian rulers, king after king and event following event, forms the burden of the epic song in chronicle order down to the time when Alexander the Great invaded Iran. The sway of the Parthian Arsacids, however, who followed with a rule of five hundred years, is crowded into a period of quarter that length of time (owing to an established tradition), and reduced to a minor section as compared with the rest of the poem.

Yet poesy and history join hand in hand, in fairly significant grasp, when Firdausi reaches the era of the Sasanian rule, or from about 226 to 650 A.D. It may furthermore be added that throughout his whole work Firdausi deals with his subject as a poetic chronicler and not as a cold historian; but he has succeeded withal in giving a certain unity of purpose to his long poem by keeping ever in sight the aim which he had in view, which was to exalt the fallen glory of Iran.

There are translations of the Shah-namah into English, French, Italian, and (incomplete) into German. They are referred to in the Bibliography at the beginning of this volume, the best English translation being that by Arthur G. and Edmond Warner. I have nevertheless ventured to add here some translations which I have made of several

selections, the first excerpt being rendered into rhyme, with a rhythm modelled somewhat after the *mutakārib* ; the other three are in blank verse, which latter form I have chosen also for the famous episode of Suhrab and Rustam.

KING JAMSHID OF THE GOLDEN AGE

(This monarch, who was a pioneer in civilization, is supposed to have lived about 3000 B.C., and legend assigns to him a fabulous reign of seven hundred years. In translating the present selection an attempt has been made to represent somewhat the rhythm and the rhyme of the original Persian.)¹

Then Jamshid, the scion of glorious line,
 With girt loins and full of his father's design,
 Ascended the radiant throne in his stead,
 In the manner of kings, a gold crown on his head.
 With glory majestic his form was bedight,
 The world, end to end, then conceded his right;
 The times ceased from tumult throughout the whole land,
 E'en Demons, Birds, Peris, obeyed his command!
 Prosperity waxed in the world through his lead,
 And the throne of the kings became glorious indeed.
 Quoth he, 'I am graced with the Glory Divine,
 The office of king and of priest I combine;
 The hand of the wicked I'll cut short from sin,
 Their souls toward the light it is I that shall win.

To the making of weapons he first turned his hand,
 And opened Fame's portals, as heroes demand.
 Through skill of his majesty, iron he melted
 And steel into helm, plate, and corselet he smelted,
 As mail and cuirass or as trappings for steeds;
 By the light of his genius he 'complished these deeds.
 For fifty full years in this manner he wrought,
 And treasures of that kind together he brought.

He next worked on vestments, full fifty years more,
 That the folk might have robes for the feast as for war.
 Of linen, silk, hair, and of soft floss he made
 Rich raiment, and also of fur and brocade.

¹ Text, Vullers, 1. 23-26; cf. tr. Mohl, 1. 33-37; Warner, 1. 131-134; Pizzi, 1. 137-141; cf. Rogers, p. 16 f.

The people he taught both to spin and to weave,
And woof within warp on the loom's beam to reeve ;
And when it was woven to wash and to sew ;
To learn this from him in detail did he show.

A new plan he made when all this he had done
So glad was the time and such joy he had won.
A gath'ring from every profession he drew,
And spent in this way a half cycle anew.

The class of the Priests, who as clerics are known —
Who are worshipers deemed, by a right of their own —
He now set apart from the rest of the throng,
Assigned them the hill-tops for worship in song ;
Devotion and praise it is theirs to combine,
Enwrapt in the glorious Presence Divine.

To the next of the classes he then turned aside,
The Warrior Caste's name to them is applied.
Whenever these lion-knights join in the fight,
The army and realm gain in glorious light ;
To them it is owing the king holds his throne,
And the valorous name of the country is known.

The third class as Tillers of soil you may know ;
Obligation to no one they anywhere owe.
They plant and they till, and the harvest they rear ;
And when men eat their products, no censure they hear.
They brook no command, though in rags they be dressed,
Nor by sound of complaint is their ear e'er distressed —
Exempt through their tilling the face of the ground,
Exempt from all censure and talk that goes round.
Dost know the quaint saw that the wise spokesman gave ?
' 'Tis idleness maketh the free man a slave.'

To the fourth class the Artisan name is applied ;
Their hands they all use, and their skill is their pride.

And what though a trade their sole calling may be,
Their heart from concern never wholly is free.

In this way another half century he spent,
And benefits many to mankind thus lent.
His own proper place through him each man attained ;
To each one he showed how the path could be gained,
So that each one his own fitting station might see
And should know more or less what behooved his degree.

He ordered the Div-fiends of uncleanly birth
To mix up with water the clay of the earth.
Then the crude mass, as soon as to shape it they knew,
With skill into light moulded brick-forms they threw.
With mortar and stone the foundations they raised,
By architect's science the work was appraised.
Hot baths thus were builded and palaces high,
And halls of retreat where from danger to fly.

The rocks he searched next for their jewels so bright,
And many the number his search brought to light ;
There were jewels of all kinds that came to his hold,
Such as rubies, carnelian, with silver and gold.
All these from the stones he by magic art drew,
As the key for each separate mystery he knew.

Next perfumes delicious 'twas his to invent,
Which pleasure for mortals impart by their scent ;
Like balsam and camphor and musk of the deer,
Like aloes, and amber, and rosewater clear.

Then leechcraft and healing for every known pain,
The way to 'scape ills and sound health to regain —
These secrets from hiding he all did unfold ;
No searcher like him hath on earth e'er been told.

Anon on the sea in a ship he did toss,
And swift from one land to another did cross.
In manner like that, fifty years did pass still ;
Naught else by this time he saw hid from his skill.

And when, by himself, all these deeds he had done,
No mortal he saw saving himself alone ;
And since through his skill all such things did transpire,
He planted his foot to ascend a step higher.
Yea, a glorious throne, sovran-worthy, he made,
Incrusted with gems and with jewels inlaid.
The Divs at his bidding did raise it on high,
Aloft from the plain far up into the sky,
In mid-air it shone like the glistening sun,
The king gave his edicts when seated thereon.
The whole world assembled his bright throne around ;
And stood at his glorious lot in astound,
While jewels on Jamshid were scattered and thrown ;
The day ever since has as ' New Year's ' been known,
The first of God's New Year, the month Farvadin,
Each man freed from toiling, each heart from chagrin.
The grandees in gladness a feast did array,
They called for the wine cup and minstrels to play ;
And hence doth that glorious fête ever stand
To keep up the fame of that sovereign so grand.

THE HOSTS OF IRAN AND TURAN ENGAGE IN
BATTLE

(The inveterate warfare which raged between Iran and Turan grew out of the fratricidal strife between the famous Faridun's three sons, Iraj, Tur, and Salm, among whom respectively he had divided the kingdoms of Persia, Turan, and China. The youthful Iraj, lord of Iran, was treacherously murdered by his two brothers; but his son, Prince Minuchihr, became the avenger and led the Iranian hosts to battle and victory over the Turanians. This was the beginning of the continuous series of conflicts between these two countries, which forms the burden of a large part of the Shah-namah. The opening engagement, when the avenging Minuchihr gives the signal for battle, and victory lights upon the standards of Iran, is thus described in heroic verse.)¹

When dawn burst forth from out the eastern sky,
Rending apart the darkness of the night,
Prince Minuchihr advanced out from the ranks,
Wearing his corselet, sword, and Rūman casque.

A shout, with one accord, the army raised,
Their lances lifted upward toward the clouds,
Heads full of wrath, brows knit with vengeful frowns;
They plowed the very face of earth amain.
The king arrayed his troops, as fits a host,
Left, right, and center, and the army's flanks.
The earth became like ship upon the main,
Thou might'st have said it was about to sink.

The sign he gave, on his huge elephant,
Then 'gan the ground to heave like azure sea;
The drummers marched before the elephants
With din and roar like lions in a rage,
The clarions and the trumpets sounded loud
As though a festival were taking place.

Both hosts advanced like mountains from their base,
A battle-cry rang out on either side;

¹ Text, Vullers, 1. 109, 112; cf. tr. Mohl, 1. 143-144, 146; Warner, 1. 219-220, 221; Pizzi, 1. 273-274, 278.



FARIDUN'S GRIEF AT THE MURDER OF HIS SON IRAJ
 (From the Cochran Collection of Persian Manuscripts in the Metropolitan
 Museum of Art, New York)

[To face page 100]

The plain became as 'twere a sanguine sea,
Thou 'dst said that blood-red tulips sprang from earth.

In streams of gore the elephants stood, knee-deep,
Mounted as 'twere on coral pedestals; . . .
The air was clogged with fog from the horsemen's dust,
Like lightning flashed their gleaming swords of steel,
Thou might'st have thought the sky was all ablaze,
So shone earth's surface diamond-like with flame.

THE HERO SĀM SLAYS A DRAGON

(The warrior Sām, ancestor of Rustam, is one of the heroes of the poem. Among his deeds of prowess was the slaying of a dragon which had devastated the earth. The description of this *Geste* is somewhat fantastic in its hyperbole, but is not without parallel in medieval Western romance or even in our oldest English epic, which tells of the fire-breathing dragon which Beowulf slew.)¹

When out from Kashaf's stream the dragon came
 Lashing, it made the whole world like to foam ;²
 Its length seemed stretched on earth from town to town,
 Its bulk from hill to hill seemed in expanse.
 All hearts with panic were aghast at it,
 Keeping watch day and night continuously.
 Even the sky became bereft of birds,
 The face of earth entire deprived of beasts ;
 The very vulture's wings singed by its blast,
 The world ascorch did with its venom blaze.
 Fierce crocodiles it drew from out the stream
 And eagles swift of wing from out the sky ;
 The earth, of man and moving thing was reft,
 The whole world yielded to it room and space.

Then when I saw no human being left,
 Able to dare with it in hand combat,
 I, trusting God, the World-protector pure,
 Cast from my inmost heart each spark of fear.
 My loins I girt in name of God Most High,
 Mounting my steed, whose size was mammoth-like,
 Ox-headed mace upon my saddle-cross,
 Bow on mine arm, my hauberk on my neck.

¹ Text, Vullers, 1. 194-196 ; cf. tr. Muhl, 1. 243-245 ; Warner, 1. 296-297 ; Pizzi, 1. 399-401 ; Atkinson, p. 63.

² The river Kashaf flowed by the city of Tus, Firdausi's home.

Forward like furious crocodile I rushed,
I with keen grasp, he with sharp flaming breath;
All they that saw, bade me a last farewell,
As 'gainst the dragon-monster mace I drew.
I reached it, — saw as 'twere a mountain huge,
Its coil-like hair was dragging on the earth;
Its swarthy tongue looked like an ebon tree,
Its gnashing jaws, wide yawning, barred the path.
Two pools of blood its gleaming eyeballs were!
At sight of me it roared, and furious sprang:
It seemed to me, O thou that hearest this,
As though it fire bore within its frame.
The ground seethed like a sea beneath my eyes
Or floated like a sombre cloud in smoke;
Aghast was, at its roar, the face of earth,
The world empoisoned was, like China's sea.

Then lion-like, I raised a fearful shout,
As it behooveth man of valiant heart,
And set forthwith an arrow on my bow —
It was a shaft whose point was diamond —
And shot the arrow down its jaws amain,
Pinning its tongue within that awful mouth.

And yet remained a part of its tongue outside
Beyond the cloven jaws after that stroke.
Into its throat I launched a second shaft,
Whereat the horrid creature writhed with pain;
Then shot a third into its maw adown.
The dragon's life gushed from its baneful spleen.
But earth had grown too narrow for my rage,
In wrath I drew my famed bull-headed mace —
(With strength from God, Lord of the Universe) —
Spurring my mammoth steed apace towards it,

And smote with bull-topped mace the dragon's head,
(Thou 'ldst say the sky a mountain had poured down !)
Like a mad elephant its skull I crushed,
Venom streamed over all, like the River Nile.
It ne'er recovered more from my blow's force ;
The ground rose mountain-like with its huge brain,
While Kashaf's stream to bitter bile was churned ;
Then peace and rest once more to earth returned.

THE FATAL COMBAT OF SUHRAB AND RUSTAM

(The episode of Suhrab and Rustam, in which the warrior Rustam unwittingly slays his own son in single combat, is one of the most famous episodes in the *Shah-namah*. Parallels in the Old High German epic fragment of *Hildebrand and Hadubrand* or in the tragic story of *Cucullin and Conloch*, preserved in the reliques of Irish poetry, are not far to seek. Matthew Arnold, in English, has modelled his 'Sohrab and Rustum' on the theme, with a free treatment but with poetic art sustained to the tragic close. Blank verse is here chosen for my rendering from the Persian.)

1. RUSTAM PREPARES FOR THE FRAY AGAINST THE HERO OF TURAN¹

Rustam made ready, donned his tiger-mail
And girt the royal girdle 'bout his waist.
Vaulting on Rakhsh, his steed, he took the road.
To Zawarah, guard of the throne and host,
He said: 'Advance no further step from here;
Hearken to me rather than to the chiefs!'
His gonfalon they bore along with him;
Thus marched he forth, vengeful and full of wrath.

When he saw Suhrab and his neck and arms,
And brawny chest like that of warrior Sām,
He said to him, 'Come, let's aside from here,
Let's to a field of fight outside the lines!'
Suhrab clasped hands with him and then withdrew
To the place of fight far from the serried ranks,
Saying to Rustam, 'On! till we arrive
At the place apart! We are the heroes twain:
Not one need we from Iran or Turan,
Enough that thou and I together fight.
Yet on the field there is no room for thee,
Not one blow from my fist thou could'st withstand;

¹ Text, Vullers, 1. 487-489; cf. tr. 162; Pizzi, 2. 263-266; Rogers, p. 169-Mohl, 2. 115-117; Warner, 2. 161-174.

Tall though thy stature, stout thy chest and neck,
They are enfeebled with the weight of years.'

Rustam cast glance upon the champion bold,
Upon his shoulders, arms, and stirrups long;
Gently to him he said, 'O gentle youth,
The earth is cold, the air is mild and warm.
Though old in years, I've many a combat seen,
Many the army I have crushed to earth,
Many the demon that my hand hath slain,
Nor saw I yet when I have met defeat.
Just wait till thou hast seen me on the field;
Should'st thou survive, fear not Leviathan!¹
For seas and hills my combats have beheld,
The stars bear witness to my feats achieved
Against the heroes famed of Turan's host;
In valor's realm the world is 'neath my feet.
Yet, pity 's in my heart for rue of thee,
Life from thy body I would fain not reave;
Stay not with the Turks — having such neck and arms —
Thy compeer in Iran I ne'er have known.'

When parley such from Rustam's lips had come,
The heart of Suhrab throbbed, yearning towards him.

Quoth Suhrab, 'Just one question I will ask —
'Tis wholly fit thou should'st the truth reveal;
Thy lineage tell to me in all detail,
And gladden thou my heart with thy good word,
For I believe that thou art Rustam, aye,
Sprung from the stock of famous Nariman.'
Then out spake Rustam: 'Rustam I am not,
Nor sprung from stock, line of Sām Nariman!

¹ The Persian word *nahang* or *nihang* (cf. Skt. *nihākā*?) designates some monster of the deep; it is generally

translated as 'crocodile, alligator,' and is a synonym in the epic for something that is the extreme of ferocity.

A hero, he ; I his inferior am,
Nor throne is mine, nor rank, nor diadem.'

From Suhrab's hope came not a joyous ray,
Dark turned for him the brilliant light of day.

2. THE FIGHT BETWEEN SUHRAB AND RUSTAM

Forth to the field went Suhrab, lance in hand —
Still pondering on his mother's tale of his birth.¹

A narrow place as field of fight they chose,
And with their javelins short began the attack ;
Nor point, nor joint upon the spears remained.
Curb turned to left, they fought with Indian swords,
Pouring forth flame from out the edge of steel —
The blades by force of blows asplinter were —
(Such blows might bring to pass the Crack of Doom !)

Then grasped they each their clubs of mighty weight,
And smote each other, dealing blow for blow.
Broken their maces from the fierce impact ;
The horses staggered, the furious foemen reeled ;
Off from the steeds the armored trappings fell,
The corselet on each warrior's breast was rent.
Chargers and heroes worn and weak alike,
No strength in either's hand or arm remained.²
Their bodies sweating, mouths filled full with dust,
Their tongues all parched and cracked with burning thirst —
Thus parted they — all full of wounds the sire,
The son with pain and full of anguish-fire. . . .

¹ Suhrab's mother, on his departure for war, had told him the strange story that Rustam was his father, though the sire knew not the truth, because at his birth she had sent the warrior hero word that a daughter was born

to him, lest that the child be taken from her.

² Possibly *bāzū*, lit. 'arm,' may here refer to the foreleg of the steed, to carry out the parallel; cf. Avestan *bāzu* in *Yt.* 8. 22; *Vd.* 18. 70.

3. NEXT MORNING THE BATTLE IS RENEWED¹

When the sun's brilliant orb its wings had spread
 And black-plumed raven night its head had bowed,
 Rustam, of mighty bulk, his tiger-mail
 Did don, and climbed his dragon-charger Rakhsh.
 Between the lines was two leagues' space of ground
 Which none dared tread or enter in the midst.

Suhrab the night had passed with wine and harp
 Telling his friend Humán, in company,
 How sure he felt he had with Rustam fought,
 And his misgivings at the coming fray.²

He, too, at dawn when the bright sun arose
 And warrior-knights lifted their heads from sleep,
 Arrayed himself in armor for the fight,
 His head with combat filled, his heart with mirth.
 Shouting he came into the battle-plain
 Wielding in hand a mace with bullock's head.

Of Rustam, then, he asked with smiling lips,
 (As had the twain the night together passed),
 'How didst thou rest last night? How rise to-day?
 Why is thy heart's design on combat set?
 Throw down thy mace;³ fling off thy vengeful sword;
 Cast to the earth this unjust wicked strife!
 Let us dismount, and down together sit,
 Making our sad cheeks bright with drafts of wine.
 A covenant in God's sight let us make,
 And heartily repent of seeking war.
 Let some one of the rest resort to fight,
 Be reconciled with me and join in feast.

¹ Vullers, text, 1. 497-500; cf. tr. Mohl, 2. 126-130; Warner, 2. 168-171; Pizzi, 2. 276-281; cf. Rogers, pp. 178-184.

² In translating this paragraph several lines have been abridged.

³ So the reading of Ms. P, with *gurz*, 'mace,' instead of *tīr*, 'arrow.'

My heart for love of thee doth inly yearn
 And bringeth tears of shame into my face.
 Seeing thy birth comes of heroic stock
 'Tis fit that thou make known to me thy line ;
 Thy name thou shouldest not from me conceal
 Now that in fight with me thou art to join.
 Art thou the son of Zāl, son of brave Sām,
 The famous Rustam of Zabulistan ?'

Rustam replied, 'O seeker after fame,
 In parley such as this we've ne'er indulged !
 Of wrestling we did speak a word last night —
 I stand no tricks ; make thou no use of them !
 No child am I, though thou thyself art young,
 My loins I've girt already to meet the fray.
 Come, let's engage ! and let the issue be
 That which the World-protector may ordain !
 I'm well acquaint with pride and with its fall ;¹
 Nor am I man that speaketh guile and fraud.'

Suhrab replied : 'Old man, if thou dost spurn
 My counsel — though it were my wish that thou
 In time should'st quit thy life upon thy bed,
 While those thou leav'st behind should for thee make
 A tomb, thy soulless body to enshrine —
 Yet, if thy life within my hand is laid,
 At God's mandate I'll take it from that hand.'

Down from their battle chargers leapt the twain,
 In mail and casque ; cautious they made advance ;
 Each tied his steed of war fast to a rock
 And then came on, each with a troubled soul.
 They grappled like two lions in desperate clinch,
 With sweat and blood in streams their bodies ran ;

¹ Literally *farāz u nishīb* is 'ascent and descent' (*i.e.* exaltation and abasement in life).

From dawn until the sun his shadows stretched
They strove, in turn, each other to o'ercome.
Suhrab attacked as some mad elephant,
And sprang like roaring lion from his lair,
Seized Rustam's girdle-band and tugged amain,
(Thou would'st have said he meant to rend the earth !)
Then raised a cry, with wrath and vengeance filled,
As he the lion Rustam dashed to earth.

As raging elephant then he Rustam grasped,
Raised him aloft and hurled him down again,
Then sat upon his chest of mammoth size,
His hands and face and mouth covered with dust,
E'en as the lion smiteth with his paw
The wild ass, and it straightway meets its death.
Then forth his dagger keen of blade he drew,
Eager to cut his foe's head from its trunk.

Which seeing, Rustam lifted his voice and said,
('The hidden secret must at last come out ! ')
Speaking to Suhrab, ' Lion-queller bold,
Master of lasso, mace, and dagger-thrust,
Our custom different is from that of yours,
Our rule ordaineth something else than that.
The man who joins in wrestling with his foe,
And brings the chieftain's head down to the earth,
Planting his shoulders squarely on the ground,
Though wroth takes not his head at the first fall ;
But if he bring him down a second time,
Winning by triumph thus the ' Lion Name,'
He then may from its trunk the head cut off:
Such is the custom which prevails with us.'

By strategy like this he sought escape
From out the dragon's clutch, and death t'elude.

The brave youth yielded to the old man's plea
(Though Rustam's words, in sooth, were not in place)
In part through confidence, in part through fate,
In part, no doubt, through greatness of his soul.
Suhrab freed Rustam from his hand amain,
Turned to the waste where wild deer scoured the plain. . . .

4. COMBAT RENEWED THE NEXT DAY — SUHRAB WOUNDED
TO DEATH ¹

Once more their steeds they tethered ere the fray ;
(Ill-destined Fate was drawing to its end.
When Fortune once doth show malignity,
The flinty rock becometh soft as wax !)
Then took their grip to wrestle all anew.
Each seized the other by the girdle-strap ;
But as for gallant Suhrab, thou'ldst have said
High heaven had bound in bonds his strength of hand.

Rustam in rage reached out to clutch his foe,
He seized the champion by his head and neck,
Bent down the body of the valiant youth,
Whose time had come, nor strength in him remained,
And like a lion dashed him to the earth.
Yet knew he well he would not stay beneath,
So, from his belt quick drew his gleaming blade
And gashed the bosom of his valiant son.

'Ah !' gasped out Suhrab from his soul and writhed ;
Nor recked he then of either good or ill.
'Vengeance comes on me from myself,' he cried,
''Twas Fate that gave into thy hand the key ;
Of this thou'rt blameless, that the vaulted sky
Hath raised me up to cast me down so soon.

¹ Vullers, text, 1. 502-504 ; cf. tr. 172-174 ; Pizzi, 2. 284-287 ; Rogers, Mohl, 2. 132-135 ; Warner, 2. pp. 184-188.

My peers in years will speak of me with scorn,
Because my neck hath come thus to the dust.

My mother gave me signs to know my sire ;
My love for him hath brought my life to an end.
Ever I searched that I might see his face,
'Tis thus I gave my life through that desire.
My search, alas! came to no lucky end,
My father's countenance I ne'er have seen !

Yet, shouldest thou become a fish in the sea,
Or turn, like night, into the murky air,
Or e'en become in heaven like a star,
Or blot the brilliant sun out of the world,
Vengeance on thee my father 'll surely take,
When he shall see my pillow is of clay !
Some one of those renownèd warriors
Will bring the proof to Rustam and the news :
"Suhrah's been slain and cast as a vile thing
Away, while he was making search for thee !"

As Rustam heard, his brain turned in a whirl,
Darkling the world became before his eyes,
His body failed, his strength and vigor ebbed,
From off his feet he fell and swooned away.

When once again back to himself he came
He asked of Suhrah, with deep groan and moan,
'Tell me what marks of Rustam thou dost have,
(May his name perish from the warriors' roll!)
For I am Rustam ! — Perish the name! and may
Zāl, son of Sām, sit mourning for my death!'

He raised a cry, his blood within him seethed,
His hair he tore and uttered moan on moan.

When Suhrah Rustam saw in such a state
His sense took flight a moment from his brain.

Anon he spoke, 'If thou art Rustam true,
 Wanton and in bad blood thou hast me slain ;
 In every way I made advance to thee,
 But not an atom of thy love did stir. —
 Undo the fastening of my corselet now
 And look upon my glowing body bare ;
 The onyx on my arm regard — 'twas thine —
 And see how a son hath by his father fared.¹

When the drum raised its voice before the gate,
 My mother came — (cheeks stained with tears of blood,
 Broken her heart because I had to go) —
 And tied this onyx round about my arm.
 "A keepsake," said she, "from thy sire it is,
 Guard and preserve it till it comes of use."
 And now the use is past, the strife is o'er,
 The son hath perished 'neath his father's eyes.'

When Rustam loosed the mail, the onyx saw,
 He rent the clothes upon his frame, and cried,
 'Ah! thou, my son, art by mine own hand slain,
 Thou hero, praised in every company !'
 He poured forth tears of blood, tearing his hair,
 Covering his head with dust — face drenched with tears.

To him said Suhrab, 'That is worse than bad,
 It naught behooves to fill thine eyes with tears ;
 What profit now for thee to slay thyself ?
 The deed is done, and done it was to be.' . . .

5. THE LAST WORDS OF SUHRAB²

And when a clamor from the camp arose,
 Suhrab to mighty Rustam spake once more.

¹The reading of Ms. C is followed
 in the translation of these two lines.

²Text, Vullers, 1. 505-506 ; cf. tr.
 Mohl, 2. 136-137 ; Warner, 2. 175-176 ;
 Pizzi, 2. 288-289.

'Now that my day is passed away and gone,
 The 'Turks' affairs have ta'en a different huc;
 Do me this act of love; see that your King
 Lead not in war his host against Turan.
 'Twas but through my support, greedy of war,
 That towards Iran's frontier they turned their face.
 For many days I gave them tidings good,
 In many ways I did their hopes fulfil,
 How could I know — O hero, named to fame —
 That I should perish by my father's hand!
 Not one of them must suffer on the retreat;
 Have thou regard for them with naught save love.

In yonder fort is a captive brave of mine,
 I caught him with the slip-knot of my noose;
 Him oft I asked some sign for knowing thee —
 Thy image saw I ever in my eye —
 Yet was his answer everything but that.
 ('Twas his own fault a high post is unfilled!)
 Hopeless did I become at what he said,
 And my bright day was turned to murky gloom.
 Yet see thou who of Iran's host he is,
 No harm must come unto his life for this.¹

The signs my mother gave I saw in thee,
 But, though I saw, I trusted not my eyes;
 My evil fate was written on my brow
 That I should die by mine own father's hand;
 Like lightning came I, like the wind I go;
 Happy in heaven, perchance, I may thee see.'

Thus died Suhrab by his own father's hand, and Rustam
 mourned for his son and would not be comforted.

¹ A fine touch, this dying appeal to save a captive's life.



THE DEATH OF SUHRAB BY THE HAND OF HIS FATHER RUSTAM
(From the Cochran Collection of Persian Manuscripts in the Metropolitan
Museum of Art, New York)

[To face page 114]

CHAPTER X

EPILOGUE

‘The intelligible forms of ancient poets.’

— COLERIDGE, *Translation of Wallenstein, Part I*, 2. 4. 123.

THE chapters which have gone before on Early Persian Poetry cover a long period — a period of nearly two thousand years from Zoroaster to Firdausi. The verse of Iran’s song broke forth first from Zoroaster’s prophetic lips, chanting praises divine in ages long before the Christian era. Echoes of music from the palace halls of the great Persian kings in ancient times and from the courts of the Sasanian rulers, when minstrel verses charmed the assemblage on festive occasions, still haunt the ear, but only as faint memories of a by-gone past.

The shouts of Arab invaders drowned these strains, and Persia’s vanquished heart found no expression in tuneful lays until nearly two centuries had passed. In brighter national days the strings of the silenced lute and harp were touched once more, and Persia, awakened, again raised its voice in song. A brief stanza, heard here or there, an ode, panegyric, or stray quatrain, told that poetry was reborn.

The minstrel’s voice rang out anew. It was slender, but full of lyric grace, light-hearted in buoyant fancy, or reflective in thoughtful vein, keen in sympathy for surroundings, rich in a feeling for nature, and, above all, ever thoroughly

human. These we may count as some of the characteristics of the bards that sang down to the time when the epic rhapsody of Firdausi's verse gave the assurance that Persian poetry was destined to live on.

Firdausi was not only great in the heroic strain, but was a master likewise in the art of composing lyric and romantic verse, about which more may be told at some later time. It seems fitting, however, to let this volume close with his manly voice amid the fanfare of trumpets, the din of battle, and the martial deeds that ended in triumph, but in death.

And deep in my heart I cherish the hope that sometime I may touch on that chord of mystic harmony, which long ago and always has thrilled the Persian soul, and that I may likewise revive for Western ears some of the later lyric strains and some of the romantic melodies in song which give to Persian poetry a place among the great poetic literatures of the world.

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